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**ART INSTITUTIONS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN A POST-CONFLICT
SOCIETY**

A thesis presented

by

Pooja Savansukha

to

The Political Science Department

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for Honors in Political Science

Trinity College
Hartford, CT
April 20, 2015

Thesis Advisor

Department Chair

Art institutions and national identity in a post-conflict society

How can art institutions address past mass atrocity, and what does this reveal about the relationship between art and politics in post-conflict societies?

A case study of the role of art institutions in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina

Abstract

Post-conflict societies inhabit a prolonged identity crisis. This crisis defines the scenario in present day Bosnia and Herzegovina, where ethno-centric narratives embody the consciousness of the Bosniak, Croat, and Serb populations, inhibiting the prevalence of an overarching national identity.

In this thesis, I contend that realizing a national identity, as defined by Benedict Anderson, is crucial to the reconciliation of a post-conflict country such as Bosnia. In light of the limitations of parliamentary structures (such as those defined by Bosnia's Dayton Agreement) within a society affected by mass atrocity, I argue that art institutions are capable of negotiating the question of a national identity. Focusing on Bosnia, I have examined the nation's representation in the Venice Biennale, the phenomenological significance of the Sarajevo Film Festival, and finally, the function of museums and public art within the nation. This has revealed how art institutions can address the past in order to memorialize and revisit significant events to realize a collective history, act as a soft body power, create new traditions and narratives, and act as a means for society to realize the distinctness of the nation.

My research concludes that art institutions can certainly fulfill long-term and symbolic functions that governmental or legal bodies fail to effectively address, despite their limitations in regards to outreach, access, and the dubious assumption about the effects that they can have on a post-conflict society. This ultimately reiterates the importance of art to the political imagination, not just in Bosnia, but also in other post-conflict societies.

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Introduction: Literature Review and Background

Nigerian poet, Ben Okri famously articulated that “Politics is the art of the possible; creativity is the art of the impossible.” (Okri 101) Bearing this in mind, and over the course of my time at Trinity College, I grew interested in tracing specific intersections between art and political theory. A study tour to Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina as part of a “Humanitarian Law and Armed Conflict”¹ course in March 2014, simultaneously sparked my curiosity to investigate the complex case of this post-conflict society. In preparation for my thesis project, I began by examining theories proposing the way post-conflict societies should be addressed. Following this, I researched the nature of identity and its importance in the aftermath of a conflict. Acknowledging the drawbacks of strictly legal or legislative approaches towards reconciling a national identity, I realized the significance of exploring the role that art and art institutions could play in Bosnia in particular, and in post-conflict societies in general. Consequently, I arrived at my research question:

How can art institutions [art fairs, film festivals, museums] address past mass atrocity in the case of Bosnia, and what does this reveal about the relationship between art and politics in post-conflict societies?

Post-Conflict societies and Transitional Justice

Martha Minow perpetuates that the way a society transforms in the aftermath of an atrocity of the scale of genocide is a complicated, and multi-faceted concern. She states that

¹This was my core class while studying abroad in Copenhagen in Spring 2014 through the Danish Institute for Study Abroad. During the study tour to Sarajevo, we visited war-torn areas, met local and international politicians, military officers, had discussions with religious leaders, representatives of NGOs, and human rights activists. We also met college students and recent graduates who narrated to us, their first hand accounts from the war.

the “most appalling of the genocides, the massacres, systematic rapes, and tortures has been the destruction of the remembrance of individuals, as well as of their lives and dignity...Yet some of the incidents of mass violence are linked as well by wondrous, though painfully complex, transformations of the surrounding societies, after the events.” (Minow 1-2) Minow thus suggests that the aftershock of the violence in a conflict entails more than a physical suffering as it affects the emotions and memories of the victims in the society. This indicates that a conflict can disrupt a society and the transformation that could restore it or recreate an order based on trust and equality, is extremely complex.

For Minow, the process of transformation after mass atrocity is inhabited by a dilemma: while the violence must be recalled and addressed for a community to heal from the trauma caused, too much recollection without an adequate medium to move on could be equally detrimental to the reparation of society. In light of this dilemma, scholar Susanne Buckley-Zistel adds that a “post-conflict society is a reflection of the political and social tensions which have caused the violent conflict in the first place. Although the causes of the conflict have often changed during its course, the antagonisms at the end of the violence are often strengthened by the experience of violence itself.” (Buckley-Zistel 16) Given the emotionally traumatic nature of conflicts, she suggests that the violence in a conflict can aggravate the disputes that caused it in the first place. Thus a society could become more fragmented and a culture of distrust could amplify in its aftermath. Buckley-Zistel, and Minow would both agree that it is crucial to address that fragile society in an appropriate manner to allow for reconciliation to take place, and to avoid any kind of post-conflict violence. A conflict effectively does not end when the violence does, it ends when members of society can move on from the atrocities and are at peace with each other.

Scholars disagree about the ideal way to address a post-conflict society. A popular response in the aftermath of conflict involves the uncovering of the truth, finding ways to accept and address this truth, and to use this information to move on. Priscilla Hayner expresses the importance of ‘Truth and Reconciliation Commissions,’ stating that truth commissions are “bodies set up to investigate a past history of violations of human rights in a particular country – which can include violations by the military or other government forces or armed opposition forces.” (Hayner 14) In justifying truth commissions as effective bodies that have helped societies such as South Africa or Argentina deal with the past, she views them as a tool for ‘transitional justice.’ As she further explains - on a basic level, truth commissions can uncover details about the past that may have otherwise remained unknown or denied. This allows victims and perpetrators to see ‘eye to eye,’ and for the intervening legal or governmental body to acknowledge and address the crime, which could be cathartic for the victim. (Ibid) Truth Commissions (or institutions with similar functions) thus provide victims with a platform to share their stories with and among other members of society, possibly resulting in a collective form of catharsis where people who have had similar experiences could help each other in dealing with their pasts.

Scholar Bronwyn Ann Leebaw states, “the idea that a durable peace requires countries to address past violence is now widely held and promoted by influential leaders and institutions under the broad heading of transitional justice.” (Leebaw 96) However, she sees truth commissions or crime tribunals purely as tools that are “obstacles to reconciliation and charged with opening old wounds,” and claims that “transitional justice institutions aim to challenge the legitimacy of prior political practices and transform the terms of debate on past abuses, yet they also seek to establish their own legitimacy by

minimizing the challenge that they pose to dominant frameworks for interpreting the past.” (Ibid) Leebaw believes that institutions administering truth commissions or crime tribunals are more concerned with reinforcing their own legitimacy and gaining acceptance towards the new mode of governance in society that they propose, rather than in repairing a post-conflict society. The bureaucracy and alternative goals involved within these organizations may thus diminish their overall effectiveness.

Most instruments of transitional justice, including truth commissions that are prescribed by legal or political scholars are set up by authoritative bodies, or judicial systems. A legal framework is commonly seen as ideal in responding to the past, as exhibited by the Nuremberg trials, or the Jerusalem Court trials, following the Holocaust. Scholar Kieran McEvoy states, “transitional justice discourses are themselves justice arguably cloistered by a peculiarly durable variant of legalism, precisely because the area was so self-evidently political.” (McEvoy 439-440) McEvoy effectively points out that a legal approach could be successful in addressing the past in ordinary criminal cases, but is complicated in conflict crimes as the politics embedded in the crimes shrouds the possibility of clearly identifying victims and perpetrators. Furthermore, the trauma that victims face is disproportionate to the effectiveness of mere identification of perpetrators and consequent penalties that law prescribes.

A legal approach appears necessary, but debatable. While the law can guarantee retributive justice, Iavor Rangelov argues that “law is often seen as a blunt instrument for addressing traumatic experiences of large-scale violence and abuse, even in societies where justice may be in high demand.” (Rangelov 47) He poses the questions “can general rules of law be applied to exceptional massacres and atrocities without distorting or normalizing

them? Are legal procedures too formalistic and rigid to comprehend multiple experiences of suffering and injustice?” (Ibid) These questions highlight the drawbacks of legal approaches in independently reconciling post-conflict societies, as the extent of the crime exceeds the boundaries of what law can define. Katherine Franke claims that “translation of human suffering into the language of law and rights will always satisfy the interests of legal authorities more than those who are called to narrate their pain.” (Franke 818) This claim reinforces that what an authority may label or accept as catharsis may not truly indicate that those who are affected by the conflict are healed. In addition, scholar Gérard Bouchard suggests that transitional justice is often framed and organized by the elites of society. (Bouchard 135) Thus, while legal approaches to transitional justice appear promising as they create a space where victims can have stories be officially recognized and where they can meet with others with similar experiences, they hold drawbacks because the limited language and tools of the law may not have a place for the unspeakable aftershocks caused by crimes during conflict.

Buckley-Zistel effectively explains that “at the end of a war, societies are often more strongly divided than in the beginning. And the way the violent past is remembered proves to be a core element of collective identity construction – either in rejection or rapprochement of previous opponents.” (Buckley-Zistel 4) Accepting the significance of identity construction may be central to repairing a post-conflict society as Buckley-Zistel suggests, I thought it would be beneficial to study the conceptions of identity in relation to conflicts.

Notion of identity in post-conflict societies

Acknowledging the challenge that conflicts can pose towards collective identities (as Buckley- Zistel suggested), it is relevant to consider what a collective national identity means. Scholar, Benedict Anderson defines a nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as inherently limited and sovereign.” (Andersen 6) He clarifies that “it is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” (Ibid) These imaginations stem out of various national markers- such as common languages, emblems (flags, costumes, etc.), experiences, and a shared history and culture. Anderson’s claim that national identity is born out of a political imagination shall be the most relevant to my thesis, particularly in investigating the non-judicial ways of reconciling a society. Accepting that his definition applies to regular sovereign societies, it can be deduced that Anderson’s idea of a nation as an “imagined political community” does not correspond with the situation in a post-conflict nation. Fragmented communities at the aftermath of the conflict may have different imaginations, based on different narratives of the past.

Emma Hutchison and Roland Bleiker argue that traumatic events (such as war or conflict) can disrupt existing patterns of identity and community. (Hutchinson, Bleiker) Buckley-Zistel confirms, “a defining characteristic of present day intrastate wars is that they are no longer confined to the battlefield but increasingly affect civilians so that almost everyone is affected by a traumatic experience such as direct violence, or the loss of loved-ones and property. At the end of a war, societies are hence often more strongly divided than

in the beginning. And the way the violent past is remembered proves to be a core element of collective identity construction-either in rejection or rapprochement of previous opponents.” (Buckley-Zistel 4) Both scholars thus agree that trauma in the aftermath of conflict greatly affects individuals’ sense of identity, aggravating any existing notions of conflicting identities. Therefore these scholars’ arguments contribute towards the idea that the notion of a post-conflict identity fragments Anderson’s conception of the ideal “political community.” The goal, in attempting to repair a society from this perspective, should thus be to recreate Anderson’s proposition of a single “imagined political community” within a post-conflict sovereign state.

Bert Klandermans and Marga de Weerd identify two types of identity- individual, and collective. They argue that individual identity is constituted by a self-identity defined in terms of ‘personal attributes’, and a social identity defined in terms of ‘social category memberships.’ The collective identity consists of “the shared definition of a group that derives from members’ common interests, experiences and solidarity.” (Klandermans, de Weerd) While there is an extensive literature on similarities and contrasts between the individual and collective identity, my intention is only to point out the idea of the two, and focus on how they are affected by conflict. According to the scholars, it can be deduced that, in the case of ethnic or cultural identity related conflicts (as Samuel Huntington also pointed out in *Clash of Civilizations*), the consciousness of differences between the communities in conflict may increase in the aftermath. Trauma caused by the violence affects conceptions of individual, as well as collective identities. This lends towards dissimilar national imaginations.

While conflict can be conventionally imagined in one sense as between separate

nations, I intend to focus on wars between ethnicities, within pluralistic societies. In these cases, the idea of an ethnic identity is significant. Anthropologist George De Vos defines the term ethnic group as “a self-perceived inclusion of those who hold a common set of traditions not shared by others with whom they are in contact. Such traditions include ‘folk’ religious beliefs and practices, language, a sense of historical continuity, and common ancestry or place of origin.” (De Vos 18) In post-ethnic-conflicts, the divisions between ethnic groups within a nation are only aggravated. The reinforcement of a sense of an overarching national identity in this case could be a prescription for such a post-conflict society.

Legal frameworks of addressing past violence could attempt to reconcile individual or collective (including ethnic) identities, but they might be limited in addressing trauma and reinforcing or reconstructing a national identity. This limitation draws attention towards focusing on organizations that are separate from direct legal or governmental control that in this situation might as well be categorized as tools possessed by “hard power”. (Nye) In light of the failure of more aggressive or imposing forms of addressing certain issues, Joseph Nye coined the term “soft power” that possesses the means to persuade rather than coerce using (amongst others) elements that could evoke in history and culture. (Ibid) In light of constructing (or reconstructing) a national identity, scholar Leanne Hoogwaerts argues that ‘soft power tools’ can “keep doors open for political negotiations, and [aid] the creation and development of a favorable image on an international level, allowing for leverage in political discussions.” (Hoogwaerts) This insinuation makes considering art and art institutions (as soft power tools), relevant.

Art and Politics

Scholar Shoshana Felman argues that art presses us to confront the trauma that law excludes or obscures. As she states in relation to the Holocaust, “Law distances the Holocaust. Art brings it closer. We needed art-the language of infinity-to mourn the losses and to face up to what in traumatic memory is not closed and cannot be closed.” (Felman 107) This argument opens up the possibility for the more inclusive and often more powerful field of art to help address post-conflict scenarios, particularly to repair, construct, or reconstruct national identity. Where law may not be able affect peoples’ imaginations, art can definitely open up a space where communities can discuss and negotiate national imaginations to hopefully arrive at a mutually consented new definition of an “imagined political community” that Anderson would prescribe.

Most scholars of art in post-conflict societies argue that art can provide individuals with a platform for catharsis. Paul de Bruyne and Yves Maeseneer express that art “creates a time and a space to remember, to mourn, to forgive, to heal, and to glimpse a new future.” (Bruyne, Maeseneer 1) From this perspective, art is viewed as a platform for expression where people can “break out their own hackneyed modes of expression and take their personal stories to a higher aesthetic level...to overcome repression, reticence and shame to the extent they want to...and the ‘artistic’ becomes an alibi to reveal what is hidden and repressed.” (Ibid) Thus, art allows members of post-conflict societies to express (and thus potentially overcome) the unspeakable traumas that legal frameworks are incapable of recognizing or resolving. According to Bruyne and Maeseneer, artistic expression can also

offers a more private and less time-sensitive space for individuals to contemplate and heal, in a method that is not mediated and conducted by elitist legal and political bodies.

Similarly, Marie-Chantal Kalisa argues that during the Rwandan Genocide, there was “no dialogue, no debate, no forum, and thus no opportunity for dissent...Scholars and practitioners of performing arts have demonstrated how theatre can be used to restore language, and perhaps even move the nation towards fulfilling desired democratic ideals.” (Kalisa 517) She further states that “theatre has the potential to encourage performers and the audience to envision new imagery, new language, and to reconnect with ritual” and that “art allows people both to rediscover community and to find a grave for the irreconcilable.” (Ibid) Art can fulfill the objective of restorative justice, by restoring an order for people to live in and express themselves in the chaos after a conflict. This restoration is cathartic as victims can explore and arrive at a point where their lives return to normalcy through art.

This view of art as catharsis is important because it indicates that art can, for certain kinds of victims, fulfill much more than what legal tools are capable of in terms of reconciliation. However, this lens does obscure another possible function of art in post-conflict societies: art as a way of projecting or negotiating existing or reconstructed national identity. Through this perspective, I build on Younes Bouadi’s work that explicitly connects art with Benedict Anderson’s idea of political imagination and national identity, stating, “art has always played a key position in imagining communities. Art, and more broadly, culture in general has played a constitutive role in creating national identity ever since concepts of nationalism emerged in the late 18th century.” (Bouadi) He also states that art is an “active process that by itself can transform a society according to a communal imagination.” (Ibid) Bouadi implies that art can directly reflect and render communal or national imaginations,

and thus may be effective as a tool or platform (in the case of art institutions) to reconcile national identity in the aftermath of a conflict. This argument opens up the potential for art institutions to play a continuous, symbolic role in reflecting aspects of national identity, such as shared histories, cultural norms and practices that are independent to the causes of the conflict.

Scholars have focused on how art institutions, such as museums play an important role in projecting national identity. Leanne Hoogwaerts expresses that “museums and art institutions have long been at the forefront of representing cultural values and morals, being utilized as location of instruction for centuries.” (Hoogwaerts) Tony Bennett investigates this possibility, arguing, “museums can broadcast a message of power to a society through the sheer impressiveness of an exhibition that is visited by a very international public, while also operating as a manifestation of an implied nationwide appreciation of art.” (Bennett 59) Thus, museum exhibitions can be symbolic of a national consensus, reinforcing an aspect of national identity. Bennett also expresses that museums and art institutions can assist in building political relationships with foreign nations, particularly when it comes to making loans to foreign museums. Thus it is significant to consider the way museums can attempt to repair a post-conflict society.

Museums scholars for the most part, have focused on their role in reinforcing or reflecting national identity in relatively stable societies, not in post-conflict societies. By examining their role in creating identity post-mass atrocity, my project will explore the effectiveness of an art institution such as a museum in renewing a sense of national identity in a fragmented society. My project will consider museums, other national art institutions, and international establishments such as biennials or art festivals. A question I would like to

deal with is- what might it imply for a nation to host an international art event, or for the nation to also participate in one, in relation to national identity?

In response, I would consider examples of post-conflict societies that have participated in, or created international art institutions with the objective of projecting a new imagination of the nations, for citizens, as well as for the international community. Two examples include the creation of the Documenta art exhibition in Kassel, Germany, and the Sao Paulo Biennial in Argentina. The formation of Documenta (an international art exhibition held every five years) in 1955 reflected local, national and international goals. Held in Kassel, an ammunition and administrative center devastated by Allied bombing, the exhibition would play a role in the economic reconstruction of the city, while educating Germans about modern art after years of its suppression under National Socialism. Its greater objective was symbolic: to mark the rehabilitation of Germany as a civilized nation after the horrors of Nazism and the war. (Art Pulse) The Sao Paulo Biennial also aimed to bring international contemporary art to Brazil, to promote Brazilian artists on the broader stage, and to ultimately establish Brazil as a nation of contemporary culture. (Biennial Reader) In both examples, hosting international art festivals correlates with projections of national identity.

To consider how a nation's representation in an international event projects a national identity, it is worth examining Iraq's participation in the 55th Venice Biennial in 2013. The Iraqi pavilion's curator stated that their goal was to "offer a different view of Iraq and give emerging Iraqi artists the chance to showcase their work on the international stage." (Venice Biennial Catalogue, 2013) The curator also explained that Iraq's participation would nurture a "multicultural dialogue through the arts in a country

devastated by decades of war.” (Ibid) This exhibits how a nation’s representation on an international platform, serves the purpose of positively reiterating its solidarity, while making steps towards free cultural exchange with the world.

Recognizing the situation specific nature of addressing transitional society, the drawback of legal frameworks, and the possibilities that art institutions propose in addressing national identity; it is necessary to first and foremost understand the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The case of Bosnia and Herzegovina

A Brief History (Until 1992)

Bosnia and Herzegovina, located in South Eastern Europe, bordered by Croatia to the north, west, and south, Serbia to the east, and Montenegro to the south east, traces a history that spans centuries of geopolitical and cultural conflict that connect to the history of the Balkan Peninsula. To understand the crux of the contemporary situation in Bosnia, it is necessary to visit this history.

Anthropologists postulate that the first settlers in the Balkans were Indo-European tribes called Illyrians. A part of this region was annexed by the Roman Empire in the period before Christ. Following the decline of this empire in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D., and the brief rule of the Goths, the region became contested between the Byzantine Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary. Slavs settled in the region during the 7th century, renaming it ‘Bosnia.’ In the 1200s, Bosnia won independence from Hungary and remained an autonomous Christian state for around 250 years. (Dzino)

The expansion of the Ottoman Empire into the Balkans in 1463 introduced a new cultural dimension- many Christian Slavs became Muslim. Bosnian Islamic officials eventually ruled the country on behalf of the Ottoman Turks. With the eviction of Jews from Spain in 1492, many Jews also arrived in Bosnia. In 1878, the Congress of Berlin ended Ottoman rule in the region, and delegated Austria-Hungary to govern what was then labeled 'Bosnia [northern region] and Herzegovina [southern region].' (Savich)

The Austro-Hungarian Empire annexed the provinces in 1908. By 1910, the empire granted a constitution to 'Bosnia-Herzegovina' that divided its voters into three units - the Orthodox Christian (Serbs), the Roman Catholics (Croats) and the Muslims (Bosniaks). This furthered divisions between the ethnic groups. On June 28, 1914 a nationalist Bosnian Serb, Gavrilo Princip (Orthodox Christian) assassinated Arch Duke Franz Ferdinand (heir to the throne) in Sarajevo, triggering the First World War. In 1918, following the war, Bosnia and Herzegovina became a part of the newly formed 'Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.' In 1929, this name changed to the 'Kingdom of Yugoslavia.' (CNN)

When Germany invaded Yugoslavia in 1941, Bosnia and Herzegovina became a part of Nazi-controlled Croatia. Following World War II in 1945, the state became one of the socialist republics (with Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia) of the reestablished Communist Yugoslavia under Marshall Tito. Tito's death in 1980, the nation's decreasing economy, and the fall of the iron curtain, caused Yugoslavia to fragment.

In 1991, Bosnia and Herzegovina demanded independence from Yugoslavia. In a March 1992 referendum, President Alija Izetbegovic (Bosniak) officially declared the nation an independent state. Unlike other former Yugoslav states, which constituted a

dominant ethnic group, Bosnia contained a mix of Muslims, Serbs, and Croats, leading to skirmishes after independence. (UNC-Chapel Hill)

The War (1992-1995)

While Tito's regime suppressed ethnic-nationalist tendencies that went against communist principles, the splitting up of Yugoslavia made them resurface. Bosnian Serbs desired to be part of a dominant "Greater Serbia," in the Balkans. Two days after Bosnia and Herzegovina gained independence, Bosnian Serb forces backed by Slobodan Milosevic (Serbia's President) and the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army attacked Sarajevo, Bosnia's capital. They also targeted towns populated by a Bosniak majority in eastern Bosnia, such as Zvornik, Foca, and Visegrad, expelling Bosniak civilians to fulfill the goal of 'ethnic cleansing'.² By the end of 1993, although government forces tried defending the territories, Bosnian Serb forces were in control of most of the country, and Radovan Karadzic's party (of Bosnian Serbs) set up an exclusive 'Republika Srpska' territory in eastern Bosnia. (CJI)

By 1995, only three eastern towns in Bosnia— Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde— remained in Bosnian government's control. Since 1993, the U.N. had declared these as 'safe havens.' On July 11, 1995, Bosnian Serb militants overpowered Dutch peacekeeping forces stationed in Srebrenica, separated the Bosniaks in the region by gender. Some of the women were raped or assaulted while being sent back to Bosnian-held territory, while all the men and boys were killed or transported to mass killing sites. Estimates of Bosniaks killed at Srebrenica range from 7,000 to more than 8,000. (Ibid)

²Ethnic cleansing (a term coined during the Yugoslav wars) is different from genocide, because its main goal is the eradication of a group of people from a geographical area, instead of the physical destruction of that group in general.

When Bosnian Serb forces captured Zepa and bombed a Sarajevo market the same month, the international community responded with urgency. As the UN was unsuccessful, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) collaborated with Bosnian and Croatian forces, to bomb Bosnian Serb positions. Serbia's dwindling economy and military expenses convinced Milosevic to finally enter negotiations in October 1995, ending the combat. The war that lasted between 1992 and 1995 had taken about 250,000 lives. (Ibid)

Post War- Dayton Agreement, Political Trials, and War Tribunals

At the end of the war, the U.S. sponsored peace negotiations in Dayton, Ohio, which led to an agreement that divided the country into two distinct cantons: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (controlled by the Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats) and the Republika Srpska (governed by the Bosnian Serbs). While the NATO and Dayton accord successfully put an end to the bloodshed, they "sowed the seeds of instability by creating a decentralized political system that undermined the state's authority...Ethnic nationalist rhetoric from leaders of the country's three constituent ethnic groups -- Muslims, Croats, and Serbs -- intensified, bringing reform to a standstill. [As of 2009] The economy has stalled, unemployment is over 27 percent, about 25 percent of the population lives in poverty, and Bosnia remains near the bottom of World Bank rankings for business development." (McMahon, Western) Thus international intervention and the Dayton Agreement were not without their flaws.

As Bosnia and Herzegovina transitioned into a post-conflict society, the International Crime Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) began prosecuting Serbian and Bosnian Serb leaders for war crimes. The most prominent of these trials was against

former Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, which began on February 2002 (seven years after the war) and lasted until March 2006, when he died in his cell in the Hague. (TRIAL-CH) One of the main perpetrators was never sentenced.

In 2007, the International Court of Justice issued a ruling in a trial brought by Bosnia against Serbia. Though the court labeled the massacre at Srebrenica ‘genocide’ and said that Serbia “could and should” have prevented it and punished perpetrators, it did not declare Serbia guilty. (ICJ) Effectively, only individuals remained guilty of the genocide, specifically - the gunmen, and their leaders. Arguably, this would assume that the only victims would then be those directly attacked in the genocide, which seems unfair to the Bosniak community as a whole.

In addition to other Serb leaders, the ICTY continued to charge and convict members of the Bosnian Muslim forces for war crimes committed against Serbs and minorities during the war. (ICTY) Bosnian Muslims and Serbs were also tried at the Bosnian state war crimes court for crimes against civilians and prisoners of war. (Balkan Peace) The ICTY’s work still continues, with the most recent significant developments including the arrest of Radovan Karadzic, Ratko Mladic (Serb General), and other Serb gunmen who were responsible for the Srebrenica massacre. After eleven years in hiding, Karadzic was arrested in 2008 and sent to face trial before the ICTY. Mladic was also arrested and sent to trial in 2011. (Portland Press Herald) The two, are yet to be sentenced. Problematically, many Serbs (and Bosnian Serbs) view the wartime leaders as heroes, believing that their convictions are falsely schemed. Furthermore, several sources claim that the reason “Serbia's conservative government is allowing the prosecutions to move forward in part because it's eager to join the European Union.” (AOL) This makes the sentences of

the Serb leaders, sensitive, as their guilt remains unrecognized by members of the ethnicity they represented in the war.

While prosecuting those responsible for war crimes forms a part of addressing post-conflict justice in Bosnia, the question of localized truth commissions or tribunals is also relevant. Hauke Kramm argues that Bosnia failed to set up any tool for rehabilitation because the “current institutional and societal set-up in the country [by the Dayton Agreement] contributes to an ongoing deadlock.” (Kramm 25) It can be noted that not only did the Dayton Agreement increase the ethnic divides, but the ICTY has also been inefficient and insufficient in truly addressing war crimes. It is safe to conclude that legal, and governmental establishments (hard powers) have failed to amend post-war Bosnia. Before considering alternatives, it is worth examining what a ‘Bosnian’ identity means.

Question of a ‘Bosnian’ identity

“Bosnia’s fractious Parliament can’t agree on words to a national anthem, much less common foreign or economic policy.” (Marton) Post-Dayton Bosnia is more divided than the nation was before the war. Intermarriage between the Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs is less common than before, and children in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Republika Srpska grow up with minimal contact with one another. “The once cosmopolitan capital, Sarajevo, is now almost monolithically Bosniak....’the hate is worse now than it was just after the war. It’s not getting better. It’s getting worse.’” (Borger) As ethnographer, Anthony Smith claims, this reflects an “ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’” (Smith). Instead of collectively identifying as ‘Bosnian,’ citizens identify as either ‘Bosniak,’ ‘Croat,’ or ‘Serb,’ in all levels of society.

A position of “a divided humanity,” surfaces as citizens struggle between being a “genuine human being” and “a loyal ethnic being.” (Brljavak) As political scholars, Peter Touquet and Heleen Vermeersch have pointed out, “it is not possible to be a Yugoslav, a Bosnian or an Eskimo in a situation in which ethnic nationalism has transcended all else and in which there are intensely localized variations in identity and ‘national’ sentiments.” (Touquet, Vermeersch) Bedrudin Brljavac states that in the aftermath of the war the “country's national groups have started thorough processes of (re) building their national identities, respectively, thus considerably reducing common and integrating features of these national communities. What is more, such calls for separate nations even have been based on attempts at the dissolution of Bosnia and Herzegovina into three separate mono-ethnic territorial units.” (Brljavac) Scholar, Florian Bieber expresses that “years after the end of the war, ethnicity continues to matter...” (Bieber)

Since a nation is artificially constructed, characterized by specific national markers, the authenticity of these markers builds the foundation of the idea of ‘nation,’ and ‘nationality.’ With imagined identities of Bosnian Serbs, and Croats being linked by identity markers such as language and religion, to Serbia and Croatia, (verified for me notably during a meeting with a Catholic representative in Sarajevo who expressed that he and other Catholics “could and should never forget” their Croatian backgrounds) rather than Bosnia, the meaning of a ‘Bosnian’ identity comes into question. The concept of segregated schooling predominant in the nation, wherein ethnic groups attend separate schools, and learn different versions of their history and backgrounds, increases the divides. (Boston Globe)

Although a 'Bosnian' identity is deemed insignificant by the overarching ethnic identities, Brljavac explains in his article that "a vast majority of Bosnians among all three ethnic backgrounds support the country's EU membership," and thus an overarching, supranational European identity could be a way to overcome "the identity fictions that exist among the country's ethnic groups." (Brljavac) Thus recent literature suggests that while varying ethnic identities in post-conflict Bosnia may fail to come to consensus about a national identity, an EU identity could be a way to bridge identity division, regardless of whether Bosnian people may support this bridge as a consequence. Recognizing that the government of Bosnia and a majority of the citizens are not actively concerned with bridging ethnic gaps, I think it is necessary to create a sense of a 'Bosnian' national identity, to create an equal society that includes minorities, and allows the ethnic groups to come to honest terms with the conflict by communicating with each other under the umbrella of a shared Bosnian nationality.

Given the confused national identities, politically and socially, the representation of Bosnia and Herzegovina on international (cultural and social) platforms is interesting to consider. An example of Bosnian representation in international platforms includes, participation in the most recent Football World Cup. The Bosnian national football team qualified for the first time, for the 2014 World Cup. While this is typically a subject of prestige, an official at the Office of High representatives expressed [in my visit] that the team does not claim national support within Bosnia. He explained that often, Bosnian Croats, and Serbs show their loyalties towards Croatia or Serbia. Effectively, the qualification of the national team was met with underwhelming celebration (relative to other counties) in Bosnia. Journalist Edin Dedovic wrote, "the national football team does

not reflect the Bosnian society that exists today but merely presents an image of what it could become, given the right conditions. The game will not heal old wounds; it will not ease the economic conditions thousands of people in the country find themselves in; and it will not put Bosnia back on the track towards EU membership.” (Dedovic) This also suggests that the nation’s poor economic conditions, coupled with the war still being only a recent past, have made current national representation distant from ordinary life.

Bosnia presents a striking case that reflects the failure of governmental or legal bodies to bridge the differences between the communities in conflict. In fact, such organizations, in an effort to end the conflict, only reinforced the divides. A question that I would then consider in light of my project is - if legal and governmental (hard power) platforms and methods fail to create a unified identity, might cultural or art institutions (soft power) be more successful or have different effects in lending towards a new imagination of a Bosnian national identity? Even if Anderson’s definition of a national identity might be more explicitly linked with the politics of governance, I would like to consider the way an imagination of nationality created through art institutions could negotiate with imaginations that governmental bodies have reinforced in Bosnia for over twenty years.

In this vein, I propose three chapters: the first will examine Bosnia’s participation in the Venice Biennale as an example of its representation on a global platform, the second will consider the significance of the Sarajevo Film Festival to the proposition of a renewed sense and negotiation of a national identity, and the third will explore the importance of art museums and public art in allowing citizens to contemplate and discuss their shared history and culture.

Chapter 1

Venice Biennale: Externalizing the national myth

The way the world sees a nation can affect the way the nation perceives itself. Given the fragile and conflicted state of national consciousness within Bosnia, a lens that demands a unified portrayal of the country's national identity is the question of its representation on an international platform. This brings to mind the case of international sports championships such as the Olympics or the FIFA World Cup, where nations compete against each other. Bosnia and Herzegovina's national football team qualified for the first time to participate in the 2014 FIFA World Cup. In light of this, scholar Özgür Dirim Özkan stated- "It would not be wrong to argue that football on an international level had been one of the few occasions, which made the nation to be proud of. Most of the politicians have appreciated the success of BiH national football team, since it was expected that this would help the three ethnic groups to be united under the flag of BiH for the first time." (Özkan) This participation, which required the nation to externalize its unified identity on a platform alongside other foreign nations, could raise a greater sense of national consciousness and pride within Bosnia. Effectively, a potentially positive correlation could be drawn between national representation (on an international platform), and the consolidation of a national identity, particularly in post-conflict nations. To test this theory in the context of art and art institutions, Bosnia's participation in the Venice Biennale seems like an appropriate and fascinating example to consider because it presents the nation with a similar opportunity to represent itself on a global platform.

Regarded as one of the oldest and most prestigious of art fairs, the Venice Biennale was created by the Venetian local government in 1895 (a year before the first modern Olympic games) and was based on a model that was influenced by the world fairs of the latter half of the 19th century (particularly the Crystal Palace Exhibition). This model dictated that the Biennale be arranged by nation. Over the years, the biennial established its role as a local and national showcase, and also as a way of connecting with and developing international artistic, cultural, and economic networks. (Altshuler) Beyond these intrinsic motivations, reporting the state of contemporary art remained a primary justification for these biennials. Towards the end of the 1960s, with the global increase in the number of commercial galleries and museum exhibitions of contemporary art, and the consequent publications of art magazines and catalogs, the Venice Biennial also moved towards “structuring the selection and display of works according to a unified theme, for non-thematic presentations-especially those organized by country of origin - did little to foster an understanding of the diverse and bewildering world of contemporary artistic practice.” (Ibid) Consequently, “the national pavilions [would] themselves contribute to and be involved with the overall exhibition theme,” giving “renewed impetus to the relationship between pavilions and the main exhibition.” (Paulo Baratta) Baratta further stated “the presence of the national pavilions in our exhibition has over the years resulted alternatively in aspirations to display the specific features of national identity or, on the contrary, to show the country’s ability to be a protagonist in the cosmopolitan world of art and architecture. With the formula adopted this year [2013], the two possible aspirations—one’s own history and participation in modern society—combine, imparting new energy to the pluralism typical of the Biennale.” (Ibid) A nation’s participation in the biennial becomes symbolic of

its presence within the art radar given the prestige of the exhibition, and also facilitates its contribution towards addressing the progress and future of the nature of global contemporary art. Till date, Bosnia has participated twice in the Venice Biennale- the first time in 2003, and the second time in 2013. To recognize the symbolic significance of Bosnia's participation in the Biennale, particularly with respect to national identity, it is worthwhile to first elaborate upon the format and structure of the exhibition that is organized by nation.

The structure of the Biennale is essentially based upon the national concept that divided and organized the world politically in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Venice Biennale reflects this division by national sovereignty in the way that it divides the world of art by nations. The exhibition area in the Biennale consists primarily of the old gardens of Giardini, Arsenale- a relatively recently acquired area - and other smaller spaces scattered around the city of Venice, Italy. Each of the spaces is divided into national pavilions, and nations are invited by diplomatic means to exhibit their art in these designated spaces every two years. At the time when the nation as a political object was relatively new, the first countries that participated in the Biennale, then confined only to the space available at Giardini, constructed pavilion buildings that are still in use. Each of these buildings remains clearly marked by inscriptions such as 'ITALIA, GERMANIA, POLONIA,' (for example) and by flagpoles. Thus, in very clearly defined national territory, nations distinguished themselves through their own art. As Joel Robinson elaborates "each of these [pavilions] is owned and administered by a nation, and both the architecture and the artwork exhibited therein are inevitably bound up with a projection of national identity...the Biennale pavilions have for the most part remained; they are fixtures there, which define a particular

sense of place, not unlike temples or follies in landscaped gardens.” (Robinson 3) He further explains, “to be sure, a few of the pavilions have been restored or reconstructed from scratch, whether out of pragmatic necessity or due to a change in the way a nation sees itself.” (Ibid) Thus the pavilions were built to reflect individual national identities and imaginations, and as Robinson goes on to state, “these ambassadorial edifices (each adorned with its flag) need to match up with the most current image of the nation.” (Ibid) The structure of the Biennale and the idea of national identity thus seem to be linked. In light of this structure, the Biennale could serve as a site where Bosnia’s national identity, particularly given its post-conflict context, could be discussed and materialized.

Analogous to Anderson’s concept of the nation, “art with its political potential is able to spread the political idea of the nation, to educate, to create and preserve an identity and a collective memory, to awaken a feeling of solidarity. Through the symbolism, covered and uncovered messages, the national art internally (inside the nation) functions as a feedback. The self-perception of a nation is maintained and stabilized. Externally (international) the national art represents values, which are considered to be national by the nation itself.” (Scherf 3) The biennial as a platform for art is thus an international stage for national affairs. It is a place to display national individuals through individual art, in that an artist or artist group is able to represent his or her nation not simply as a singular agent, but also as a fellow citizen to the rest of the nation’s citizens. Given the complex question of a Bosnian imagined identity however, with regard to Anderson’s definition and the structure of the Venice Biennale, it is intriguing to consider how the question of a ‘Bosnian identity’ plays out in its participation in the biennial. Where the self-perception of the nation, or the values realized within it, are not consistent or uniform, one may question what version of

Bosnia's identity might be represented in the first place. That said, given the lack of a consensual national identity, the Venice Biennale also presents the platform and opportunity for the creation of a new national myth- one that is shared by all citizens of Bosnia.

Bosnia took part in the Venice Biennale for the first time in 2003, with a pavilion organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sarajevo, 'Ars Aevi.' Particularly in light of this participation, 'Ars Aevi' was recognized and awarded for "the boldness of its initiative, for its dedication to intercultural communication, for manifesting the power of culture in a conflict situation and for striving towards a future in which artistic vision can help us all to envision a different reality." (Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development) Bosnia's pavilion in 2003 featured Artist Maja Bajevic, who exhibited a two-channel video installation titled "'Back in Black' that depicts a number of people telling war jokes, to satirically draw out the post-war scenario in Bosnia. An example of one of the jokes- 'A riddle: What is the one-handed Sarajevan looking for as he goes down the street? – A second-hand shop.'" (Bajevic) Bajevic explained, "I did this work for the first time Bosnia and Herzegovina has participated in the Venice Biennial. Nothing is more Bosnian to me than black humor, and nothing tells more about war than war jokes." (Ibid)

Recognizing the esteem that comes with participating in the Venice Biennale, nations that typically participate for the first time are looking to build an identity in the world of contemporary art. For instance, the curator of Bahrain's pavilion³ stated that as a new comer to contemporary art, the work at the pavilion "explores what it means to be an artist in contemporary Bahrain." (Coetzee) The notion of what it means to be an artist in a certain country also extends into what it means to live in that country. Artists and curators

³ Bahrain participated in the Venice Biennale in 2013

representing certain nations may think of it as their responsibility to project a better view of their countries, dismissing stereotypes and rebuilding reputations. To consider the representation of another post-conflict nation- the Iraqi Pavilion, which participated for its second time in 2013, showcased the work of eleven contemporary Iraqi artists currently living and working in Iraq. The exhibition, commissioned by the 'Ruya Foundation for Contemporary Culture' in Iraq (RUYA) an Iraqi NGO that aims to "aid and enrich culture in Iraq, and build bridges with the world," attempted to offer a different view of Iraq and give emerging Iraqi artists the chance to showcase their work on the international stage. (RUYA) One of the RUYA commissioners stressed, "the intention is not to whitewash the daily violence, death and destruction in Iraq, but simply to "give a voice to human beings that have been overlooked." (Watkins) The exhibition was showcased in a 16th century palace that serves partly as a luxury hotel and partly as Venice's municipality buildings. Used as a pavilion for the first time, the residential palace "insinuated Iraq into this first floor apartment, creating a salon atmosphere and interactive space where visitors could sit, read and learn about Iraqi culture and drink tea." (Ibid) Similar to Iraq, other post-conflict nations such as Kosovo, Bosnia, and South Africa also aimed to use their pavilions to show art that represented aspects of their nations that are overlooked by the rest of the world. The role of art and artistic representation in contemporary times has been elevated in that it serves not just mere aesthetic or other conceptual purposes but directly engages the political mind. The pavilions of post-soviet nations in 2013, such as the Central Asian Pavilion, or that of Latvia also presented questions pertaining to politics and cultural identity. The Central Asian Pavilion addressed the "current socio-political context in the region and the issue of artistic agency." (Tuluebek, Bom) Aiming to broaden the political debate in the

region by raising questions such as: “How can the specificity of the local political and artistic context be approached in a way that transgresses common assumptions about authority and power?” the exhibition brought together visual reflections on the current socio-political situation of the region. (Ibid) With the active participation of Central Asian as well as international contributors, the pavilion thus hoped to arrive at a deeper understanding of the current socio-political situation in the region, raise new questions to discover alternative ways to move beyond the state of stagnation experienced there today. The Latvian Pavilion also presented a unique internal cultural conflict faced by the nation. As a part of the Soviet Union, it was considered the most culturally western nation; but now as part of the European Union, it is one of the most eastern nations. The pavilion thus became a platform that examined the nation’s political and cultural identity, through art. Arguably, the status of art is also raised when it becomes of tool of introspection for nations within an international context.

Bajevic’s work took on a method of using humor to reflect upon and project a view of Bosnia particularly to represent its post-war aesthetic. This could potentially extend the dialogue pertaining to the atrocities and their aftermath in the country, to the rest of the world. While the nation is not necessarily presented in a better light than the rest of the world might perceive, the innate realistic nature of the content could allow Bosnians to reflect, upon and alleviate post war ethnic tensions by virtue of the humor. This could also initiate an intriguing relational identity between Bosnia and other countries participating in the Biennial, based on the content presented as well as the symbolic significance of the nation’s participation itself. Ultimately, Stamatina Gregory, deputy curator of the Bahamian

pavilion⁴ admitted, “coming to the Biennale is an initiative on the part of the country. Its really about people who want to join the conversation, a conversation which started in the 19th century with colonial powers displaying their cultural spoils.” (Gregory) Beyond the excitement of participating for the first time that could potentially lead to the belief that nations are simply attempting to make a statement through their debut in the Biennale, Gregory clarifies that “this is the beginning of a process, not *the* statement on Bahamian cultural production in the international arena.” (Ibid) Recognizing participation in the Venice Biennale as a continuous process of engagement in an international dialogue calls for an examination of Bosnia’s consistency, or rather lack thereof in its involvement in the biennial, since its first time.

Since 2003, Bosnia did not participate in the Venice Biennale until 2013, ten years later. Artist Mladen Miljanovic who represented the nation at the 2013 Biennale expressed, “for us it is not a Biennale, but a “Decennale.” (Miljanovic) He further explained “we need to be aware of the fact that my country could not agree to participate in the Venice Biennale for the last 10 years. Representing my country at the Venice Biennale is a “problematic honour.” (Ibid) Bearing the notion of participation in the Biennale being a process that involves regular presence, it becomes significant to note that Bosnia’s non-participation in the Biennial for several years was for political reasons. This non-participation then also raises more questions pertaining to the nation’s politics and bureaucracy.

In 2007, a group of Bosnian artists, members of ‘Tačka Artists’ Association,’ visited the Venice Biennale and were appalled that once again Bosnia was not represented. Responding to this and to raise awareness about this concern, the group launched an artistic

⁴ Bahamas also participated in the Biennale for the first time in 2013

action that was called “Full-stop on Non-participation of BiH at the Venice Biennale.” They “installed a black full stop, 80-centimeters in diameter and made of cardboard, either in front of, or on the official Biennale exhibits.” (Mladen Bundalo) This did not simply intend to provide an aesthetic addition, but rather, “the action was supposed to announce on a symbolical level, the changes in the Bosnian cultural policy and to demarcate the presence of Bosnian contemporary art at contemporary art world scene, starting with Venice Biennial.” (Tačka Group) The black dot or, rather the ‘black dot of shame’ points towards the embarrassment these artists felt upon realizing that Bosnia was the only European nation that did not have a pavilion in the Venice Biennale. The notion of shame was also associated with the inefficiency of the nation’s government that was not able to even reach a consensus to allow participation in the biennial. As Igor Sovlj, member of the Tačka Group stated-“ is Bosnia and Herzegovina the only European state not represented at the Venice Biennial, is just a small piece of the problem since it's not present at any other world art event.” (Sovlj)

Back in Bosnia, the group organized an exhibition of the photo prints of this “Venice Action,” alongside works by other Bosnian contemporary artists. They named this project the “Imaginary pavilion of Bosnia and Herzegovina,” and it was intended to raise awareness pertaining to the nation’s absence from the Venice Biennale, and what this implied with relation to its politics of national identity. Thus, the absence from the biennial provided a symbolic reference for the artist group to express their frustrations with politically ingrained fragmented identities, particularly given its logistical implications. The media began investigating the problem among cultural policy makers on the state and local levels of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Republika Srpska. “The project

started the public debate on the issue and revealed all the complexity of the Bosnian political and cultural condition. In the course of two years, from 2007 till 2009 the cultural institutions and ministries in Bosnia started to deal with the problem but due to huge political disagreements in Bosnian political and cultural structure in 2009 Bosnia still didn't have its own Pavilion on Venice Biennial.” (Ibid) Although Bosnia did not participate in the Biennale for a period of time, its lack of participation generated a response that could be classified as arts activism. Simply by virtue of the Biennale's existence, structure and prestige, artists in Bosnia were able to start a conversation that reflected upon the nation's identity.

Sovlj, further stated, “the last time Bosnia and Herzegovina, even if not really a national representation, was presented at Venice Biennial was when it still emanated the necessary freshness and attraction of a typical media spectacle. Many years after that our country, deprived from world attention, is still not able to construct some unique national identity that wouldn't be measured by means of war aesthetics.” (Sovlj) With regard to the biennial as a means to project a sense of a nation to the rest of the world, Sovlj thus points out that Bosnia's non-participation also takes away the opportunity for the nation to have a platform where they can project themselves as more than just a war torn country that they are known to be. Projecting a nation's identity beyond such war aesthetics could also provide a space for citizens to reexamine their own selves in a different light in order to reconcile from the memories of war. With regard to the “Imaginary Pavilion of Bosnia and Herzegovina,” he expressed that “this action was presented to the public in Bosnia in January 2008 in a form of an exhibition. The exhibition, however, confirmed the importance of the ‘imaginary’ for the existence of the Bosnian state. The authorities of the

University of Banja Luka where the exhibition took place ordered the removal of the exhibition title from the entrance of the exhibition space and causing only some reaction in the local media afterwards.” (Ibid) In light of Anderson’s emphasis upon a national identity to be consolidated through imagination, Solvj presents an interesting point that comments on the lack of an imaginary consciousness of a ‘Bosnian’ identity. The lack of imagination appears to be rooted in the actions of the government itself - that in shutting the exhibition down, also shut down the emphasis on the imaginary that was being projected towards Bosnian society. Ultimately, while the absence from the Biennale did start a dialogue in Bosnia, it did so only to be revoked by the government, further confirming the nature of the bureaucracy that to begin with had caused Bosnia’s non-participation in the exhibition since 2003.

One might question why these art activists care about whether Bosnia participates in the Biennale in the first place. Especially given the critique of the Venice Biennale as a pretentious, old-fashioned forum for contemporary art, why would contemporary artists in Bosnia see national participation as so important? Mladan Bundalo (another member of Tačka Artists Association) addressed this by acknowledging, “the Venice Biennial is becoming more and more just another decadent cultural event that still maintains a circus-like practice of national representations highly popular in the pre-fascist time at the beginning of 20th century. However, the non-participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is not the result of some critical attitudes of Bosnian intellectuals or its ‘cultural elite’ towards the reputation of the Venice Biennial (there is no active and independent art critic in Bosnia and Herzegovina) but more the result of the incompetence of our cultural community to organize our participation in it.” (Bundalo) The lack of the governmental and societal

ability to express a unified identity, then also seems to paint Bosnia as a nation that is not able to move past logistical constraints (such as participation in the biennial) to be in a position of other European states that are at a much higher level of intellectual engagement and discussion in relation to the biennial. This marks Bosnia as a state that is less capable of intellectual progress. Bundalo further states, “having a pavilion in Venice has become an important thing even for some third world countries, and in Europe we are possibly the only one without it. For developing countries it is like a status symbol, a sign their national cultures are able to integrate in the high cultural systems of the West and Far East. It is also an act of self-confirmation for many young states and we are surely one of them.” (Ibid) For Bosnia, participation would prove more self-affirmatory to the state rather than function as a status symbol. This affirmation is however symbolically significant to the nation and its citizens, to truly imagine their ‘Bosnian’ identity.

To address the cultural and political factors that deprived Bosnia from its symbolical presence, Bundalo believes, “it is obvious the cultural micro-systems in Bosnia are too infantile to synchronize their interests and present them under one name and that the problem is not ‘cultural’ by nature but more a result of a vulgar political manipulation with the apparent ‘inter/national’ interests in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This real imagination of the culture of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the absence of its symbolical presence at the world culture map transformed its culture into mythological beast that keeps in fear, the young artists and all the other cultural and art workers ready to step out of the quicksand of the Bosnian cultural and political cognitive impotence.” (Bundalo) In stating this, Bundalo reaffirms the importance of the imaginary for the state, and its evident dearth in Bosnia that has politically created many limitations for art and culture to live up to their abilities as

tools that could cement and solidify a nation's identity. In the absence of the necessary contemporary art and culture, the nation would thus also be unable to find a place to negotiate, realize, and create new national myths to move past the post-war sentiments. Thus the political imagination of the nation that is called into question with regard to Bosnia's absence from the Biennale is also reflective of the way the nation does not have its own unique consciousness the way that correlates to the way Anderson conceptualizes, but rather is a very fragment one, defined by the very nature of the Dayton Agreement. The Tačka group, thus overall aims to draw attention towards the deficiencies within the nation that deprive it from reaching a consensual identity, and effectively from participating on a larger scale amongst other European nations that it strives to become comparable to.

Ten years after its first participation, Bosnia participated in the Venice Biennale in 2013. As Miljanovic explained, "with the support of the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the BiH Council of Ministers, we have now developed a procedure to select commissioners and artists." (Miljanovic) The nation has decided that every two years, the Ministry will appoint two commissioners, to designate the artist who will represent the country. The National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Banja Luka (Republika Srpska) will organize the Pavilion of Bosnia and Herzegovina alternately. In 2013, artist Mladin Miljanovic, selected by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Banja Luka represented the nation at the Biennale. Before considering the content he presented, it is worth noting the very significance of his participation. As the Tačka group pointed out, a major issue for the nation's government was to come to any kind of consensus; and so the nation's participation in the biennial for the second time celebrates an instance where this issue has been overcome. Furthermore, in

light of the significance that the Tačka group also placed on the way the content presented at the biennial could contribute towards projecting an identity beyond a 'war-aesthetic,' it is also relevant to consider the art work depicted at the 2013 Bosnian pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

Mladen Miljanović depicted an installation titled "The Garden of Earthly Delights." The installation consisted of three interconnected pieces - a marble triptych, a video clip and an installation. As the title itself suggests a reference to a famous triptych made by the Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch, Miljanovic assumed this triptych as the basis for his work, to establish a contemporary dialogue- Miljanović used Photoshop to appropriate it. This allowed him to create a dialogue between the past and the present, informed by his previous job as a tombstone engraver, when he would have requests from clients to engrave their gravestones with images of the things which had brought them the most happiness in life. "Inspired by this ritual of remembrance, Miljanović's installation contains more than one hundred tombstone motifs found and collected in the Central Balkans. This technique enabled him to re-enact a dialogue about Bosnian culture and how it is expressed within their burial rituals. While realizing his concept, Miljanović made a video to accompany the exhibit entitled 'Sweet Harmony of the Absurd' in which members of the Banja Luka Philharmonic simultaneously play their favorite pieces. As Miljanović describes, 'the graveyard is an area storing an encyclopedia of images of individual lives joined into a garden of collective eternity'." (The Culture Trip) Thus, by depicting a specific aspect of Bosnian culture, the artwork represents something that every citizen of Bosnia, regardless of ethnicity can relate to. In an interview with art journalist, Andrea Rossini, Miljanović stated, "I tried to [address national identity], including in the installation of the Rose

Garden, which you can also find in the Pavilion. Cultural richness lies in diversity – the beauty of the garden is not in a flower, but in its being in a garden. This is the basis for explaining the question of nationality, nationalism, and current Bosnian society.” (Miljanovic) Thus the work as a piece of art, also addresses the ideal way in which a Bosnian identity should take pride in its diversity instead of further dividing its notion of identity. Bosnia’s participation thus becomes symbolic of a political achievement in Bosnia. As Miljanović further acknowledged, perhaps this participation “could be the beginning of the solution of the problems that have so far characterized the situation of culture in Bosnia,” also in relation to consolidation of its national identity. (Ibid)

Comparing the content presented at the Bosnian pavilion, in 2003, and 2013- Bajevic’s work attempted to present an image reflecting upon the war aesthetics of the nation, while Miljanovic’s seemed to create an image beyond this theme. While one could delve into an argument for which approach is more useful to allowing a nation to contemplate its unified national identity- I would argue that regardless of the content displayed, the bigger achievement pertains to the symbolic significance of the nation’s participation. Realizing that the lack of a consistent identity is written into the Dayton Agreement, which informs the politics of the nation, a very consensus to represent Bosnia at an international platform comes across as significant achievement toward the development of new national myths. Perhaps over a period of continuous participations in the Venice Biennale, the content and the way the nation engages intellectually with other nations on this platform would become more and more relevant towards national identity, but until then-participation is key.

As the Dayton agreement has become the regulatory template for Bosnia and

Herzegovina, as a framework that supposedly stabilizes and determines the nation's existence primarily through national division, it is necessary to consider its implication on Bosnia's participation in the biennial. The Dayton Agreement divides the nation into two cantons- The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Repulika Srpska. This division is evident in the decision making process that the nation has adopted to decide who will organize the pavilion in the Venice Biennale, as the two museums (The National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Banja Luka) that will alternate to assume this responsibility belong to the two individual cantons. "The participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Venice Biennale reflects the Dayton Agreement rather than the current conditions in which various political, economical, social, and cultural relations are intertwined...Despite the inability of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska to agree on hardly anything in the country itself, they have managed to agree on the considerable shared costs of the pavilion in order to put Bosnia and Herzegovina on the map of the art world." (Ideological Guide to the Venice Biennale) Yet, one could question whether it truly is representative of the nation as the whole, if the two cantons have once again agreed to disagree, so to speak. A question that arises here is: would it ever be possible for the two museums, which belong respectively to the two separate cantons, to organize a pavilion together? Perhaps this would be a more 'Bosnian' representation that could be capable of creating newer and more powerful national myths to consolidate a 'Bosnian' identity.

In conclusion, it is evident that Bosnia's participation on a symbolic level reflects many positive signs in relation to the nation's ability to represent itself on an international platform, as this is associated with the notion of an internal political stability. Yet, there are

several questions raised pertaining to the structure of the nation itself that arise and are left unanswered. While the Biennale is not necessarily a site that can independently create a unified Bosnian consciousness, it can definitely start a dialogue that contributes towards this end. Biennale participation allows nations to provide towards the understanding national and geo-political identities, through art, making Bosnia's participation a unique opportunity. The question of a 'Bosnian' identity seems to lie in the very structure of the organization of the nation's pavilion at Venice, so a more continuous engagement would be the best way to take this further and to reiterate the question through multiple types of representations. As of 2015, Maja Bajevic will once again represent the nation at the biennial. Much like Özkan argues in the case of the nation's representation at the FIFA World Cup- "support for the BiH national football team among Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats is marginal," given the Bosniak majority on the team; it is unsurprising that the support for the biennial would also come with many limitations. (Özkan) That said, it is also important to acknowledge the potential distance between the world of art, and public realities within Bosnia. While Bosnia's participation in the Biennale or other international art platforms could be meaningful to those interested and involved in the art world, others may be completely isolated from the conversation. Despite this disparity, it is worth considering the degree to which the art world and the political can intersect with regard to the Venice Biennale, and the question of national identity.

Chapter 2

The Sarajevo Film Festival: The Nation as a Site

International Press Correspondent from besieged Sarajevo (1993): "Why are you holding a film festival in the middle of a war?"

*Haris Pašović, Director of the Sarajevo film festival "Beyond the End of the world": "Why are they holding a war in the middle of a film festival?"*⁵

While the Venice Biennale, and other international institutions outside of Bosnia provide the nation an opportunity to externalize its national myth on a global platform, it is compelling to consider what it could mean for the country to be host to such international events. In 1984, Sarajevo hosted the Winter Olympics, when Bosnia and Herzegovina was still a part of Yugoslavia. Journalist, Anna Callaghan wrote, "the people of Sarajevo worked to ready the city for the games, proud of their multi-ethnic coexistence. Those were the happy times, a golden age of sorts." (Callaghan) The event thus co-related directly with a sense of national pride within the city and country. Former Skier, Phil Mahre expressed that "the Calgary Olympics were fabulous, but they were just an Olympics; Sarajevo was a cultural experience." (Ibid) This emphasizes the multicultural charm that the city boasted, back when it was the athletic center of the world.

Sarajevo descended into disorder a few years after hosting the Winter Olympics, breaking into war as Yugoslavia split up. The same hills that hosted the Winter Games became the most dangerously destructed areas. Eight years following the Olympics, international media returned to Sarajevo. This time instead of counting medals they were counting bodies. As Callaghan, concluded in her article, "many locals still longed for those

⁵ Redžić, Mirza. "Made in War (Boomed in Peace): The Sarajevo Film Festival." *European Cultural Foundation-Narratives* (n.d.): n. pag. Web

two weeks when Sarajevo was the center of the universe [in the most positive way].” (Ibid)

Fast forward to 2014, and the city was again celebrating the arrival of tourists, and cultural elite from around the world, in light of the 20th anniversary of the Sarajevo Film Festival (SFF). Only this time, Sarajevo isn’t just a city in Yugoslavia but the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The SFF was officially founded in 1995, while the city was still under siege, “with the aim of helping to reconstruct civil society and retain the cosmopolitan spirit of the city.” (Sarajevo Film Festival) Contemporarily, it is the leading film festival in South East Europe, recognized by film professionals and wider audiences for bringing films, talent and future projects from the region into the limelight. As Drake Stutesman states in an article about the 11th annual festival SFF in 2005: “Regional movies [from the Balkans] are typically hard to promote ... and the festival, as an outreach of its area to a wider audience ... [is] crucial, and much needed [in the] blending of today’s global politics and art.”(Stutesman 134)

To contemplate the significance of the SFF to the realization of a national identity in Bosnia, it is necessary to consider its conception and consequent development, what it means for the nation to host such an event of increasing international stature, its impact on local culture, specific films from its program over the years and finally, the way it negotiates a ‘Bosnian’ national cinema.

Film Scholar Trevor Laurence Jockims explains that “if one wishes to locate the beginnings of the Sarajevo Film Festival, and the linkages between this origin and the

festival's present form, it is necessary to go back before its official birth in 1995 to its real origin in 1993—the very center of the siege.” (Jockims) During this year, theater director Haris Pasović (who also directed a production of “Waiting for Godot” in Sarajevo with Susan Sontag⁶) organized the first, and until then- the only Sarajevo International Film Festival. Film critic, Kenneth Turan described this festival as being “held for ten days in October 1993, in the teeth of the siege and shelling, the Pasović run one-time-only Sarajevo International Film Festival symbolized the furious and foolhardy daring of those determined to watch films.” (Turan 105) To facilitate the festival, “film cassettes were smuggled in, workers were paid in cigarettes and flour, and car engines were rigged to run the few available projectors. As one organizer from those first years recalled, ‘it was a war cinema, one hundred seats and a video beam projector ... in spite of the war, in spite of the shelling, it was packed every night we had a showing.’” (Jockims) It is thus, no doubt that the festival was launched as an act of protest – using cinema (as an art form) to contend that the war, which had divided the nation along ethnic lines and had devastated the region by placing Sarajevo under constant bombardment, could not kill its culture.

Between 1993 and 1996, the festival continued in a small, and somewhat unsystematic manner until 1997, when its “sponsorship expanded, growing from a reliance on humanitarian groups to some corporate sponsorship, notably from Renault and Swissair, among others.” (Ibid) Subsequently, the Bosnian government issued a postage stamp in commemoration of the 1997 festival, acknowledging its official approval of the event. In 2001, the European Film Association granted the Sarajevo Film Festival the ability to

⁶Sontag was a famous American writer, director, and political activist, who went to Sarajevo in 1993, in the midst of the siege to direct “Waiting for Godot,” that she believed reflected the situation in the country. Her artistic involvement in the nation drew a lot of international attention towards the war.

nominate films for the “Europe’s Best Short Film” competition. Notably, the winning film from that year’s competition—Danis Tanović’s “No Man’s Land” also won the academy award for best foreign film festival. Needless to say the SFF was caught up with the standard of other European film festivals, so to speak. On a symbolic level, Bosnia, by virtue of the festival, became a significant nation within the map of European contemporary culture. Furthermore, the growth of the SFF also institutionalized the notion of the power that national culture had over war, a statement that the festival was originally founded upon. Director of the 2014 SFF, Mirsad Purivatra summarized that “for the first six months of the war, to survive physically was the main goal...The second festival ended on the day the Dayton Accords formally brought the war to an end — But after the war ended, we said, ‘Let’s now work on creating a real festival.’” (Purivatra)

Scholar, Marijke de Valck examined that “the name ‘film festival’ seems to have been directly inspired by the widespread practice of community festivals through which nations, regions or ethnic groups could support and confirm essential cultural identities.” (Valck 93) He also stated that “post-war European nations began to organize film festivals as events where films were exhibited as an expression of national identity and culture...In Europe, film festivals were first and foremost regarded as a means of contributing to the actualization of the new domestic order in the West...” (Ibid 92) This new western order was one that acknowledged the notion of sovereignty and nationhood that was attached to every country. Through Anderson’s lens of a national imagination and identity, a celebration of a festival within a nation would fulfill the function of allowing citizens to realize their shared values and sense of pride. In the case of Bosnia, it can be argued that where ethnic divides do not allow for shared festivals within the nation in its entirety, the

SFF definitely functions as an event that can be celebrated by all, regardless of background. Thus it could be contended that this festival creates a new basis for understanding a Bosnian national identity.

Recognizing the SFF's potential as a festival to rekindle a spirit of national identity, it is noteworthy to consider film scholar Julian Stringer's argument that builds upon the premise that "film festivals provide a focus for the convergence of issues concerning the relation of cultural production to cultural policy..." (Stringer 2) In connecting policy that reflects the government, to 'cultural production,' Stringer's perspective would thus suggest that the growing success of the SFF corresponds with the success of the administration of Bosnia. Considering the government's failure in achieving other forms of consensus concerning in-state culture (such as lyrics for the national anthem), it is commendable that the SFF is one definite platform that (even if only for economic purposes) symbolizes unity- a positive sign in the effort to facilitate a consensual national identity.

To reiterate and elaborate the political significance of film festivals, Stringer acknowledges how other "scholars are beginning to take note of how closely film festivals relate to issues of national identity, how intimately their histories are tied up with the politics of cultural nationalism." (Ibid) Marla Stone, for example expressed how the Venice Film Festival began in 1932 as an explicit propagandist act that aimed to legitimize and promote Mussolini's fascist state on the global platform. (Stone) Scholar, Heidi Fehrenbach also described how the Berlin Film Festival in the 1950s was tied to the manifestation of German reconstruction and democracy after the fall of Hitler's regime. (Fehrenbach) Arguably, all the major festivals established in the immediate post-war period (Berlin,

Cannes, Edinburgh, Moscow, London, Venice) were closely aligned with the activities and aims of particular national governments. This kind of context thus suggests that events (like film festivals) worked to promote official state narratives and also perpetuate the continuation of the sovereign-state format. As Valck concludes, “although political agendas are discussed as powerful forces driving and shaping festivals, they are also shown to intersect with cultural objectives, economic interests and specific (inter)national historical circumstances. It has become a sophisticated way of expressing identity of a nation and creating a recognizable voice that echoes as far as abroad.” (Valck) It can thus be established that film festivals, by virtue of their connection to cultural policy (soft power) become intrinsically connected with the formation and continuous negotiation of a national identity.

The argument tying film festivals to national identity can be broadened to include the idea of hosting any kind of international, institutionalized art event. For instance, in the case of post-war Germany, it wasn't just film festivals, but other international art institutions such as the prestigious international visual arts exhibition “Documenta,” held every five years in Kassel, were also set up with similar objectives. Since 1955, Kassel has played a role in Germany's postwar reconstruction. It was thus the very post-conflict scenario in the city that ignited the conception of this exhibition of contemporary art, as a way to develop a form of German cultural diplomacy. Acknowledging Germany's status as a nation that by now definitely embodies an image beyond post-conflict rhetoric, its most recent edition in 2012 presents a noteworthy theme. Artistic director, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, “conceptualized the show from four simultaneous positions, which she describes as “phenomenal spatialities” that are interrelated and embody the conditions in which artists

and thinkers find themselves ‘acting in the present’—being ‘on stage,’ ‘under siege,’ ‘in a state of hope,’ or ‘on retreat.’ The cities of Kassel, Kabul, Cairo, and Banff are metaphors, respectively, for these alternative positions that she seeks to continually disrupt. Primary in Christov-Bakargiev’s intent is the desire to “unfreeze” the associations between each position and place, “stressing their continual shifting.” (Viso) By connecting the past, and the present, simultaneously with spatial imaginations of post-conflict and regular societies, the exhibition was able to continue the discussion pertaining to national identity in an increasing globalized world. Particularly, considering the idea of ‘phenomenal spatialities,’ it can be argued that while the SFF adds meaning to and also reflects the politics of Sarajevo and effectively Bosnia, the city and the nation also provide the event with as much character and symbolism.

Certainly, the SFF is not without its own geo-political agenda. The history of the festival, grounded in the years of the siege, remains a symbol of the kind of work that the festival has attempted to articulate and move beyond. Turan categorized the SFF as a film festival with one of the most contemporarily explicit geopolitical goals, stating, “with Sarajevo [and Havana,] film is a vehicle for trying to understand the international political community’s most vexing dilemmas.” (Turan 9) Turan correctly locates the SFF’s significance within the Bosnian context by arguing that it is an authentic “child of war.” (Ibid) This reinforces how the festival is as much a product of the political environment in Bosnia, as its citizens are, allowing for the SFF to be perceived as a genuine embodiment of culture that can very accurately and intimately mirror the same notions of identity that the citizens can relate to. By the same virtue of belonging to a common political lineage as people born in Bosnia, it can actively negotiate and engage in a local dialogue pertaining to

a possible reconstruction of the nation's identity. Was the SFF born a Bosniak, Serb or Croat? Especially given its international stature and outreach, I would argue that it is 'Bosnian,' and that is its biggest asset, which allows it to negotiate a national identity.

Scholar, Mariaa Todorova claims that hosting a film festival, "a prominent symbol of the cross- pollination of modern culture," in the midst of war in Sarajevo was ultimately a part of an effort to remove the stigma of the "bloody Balkans," and to convey to the world that Sarajevo deserves a place "in the cosmopolitan artistic cosmos." (Todorova) This draws attention towards other artists in Sarajevo, who throughout the war, strived to accentuate the city's cultural appeal that was being lost to its growing identity as merely a war torn space. During the war, about 182 plays, 170 exhibits, and 48 concerts were organized, often in collaboration with international artists. (Kurtovic) This reinforces the motive, and furthermore, the success of the SFF in gaining a leading significance within the country, as well as in presenting an image of the nation to the world that highlighted its artistic relevance. In relation to the 2009 SFF, Mirsad Purivatra claimed- "It's a party for the city, one that sees its streets turn as crowded and festive as they ever get. Yet the scars of war are still clear —visible in the art, in the films that form the heart of a festival born in defiance but bound by both tragedy and triumph...Socialism died years ago, but then the war came and we never had a chance to make a transition to democracy. We still have many untold stories from the war, from the post-war times, and from the unstable situation we're still in." (Purivatra) Recognizing that Sarajevo's and Bosnia's present is so implicitly connected with its tumultuous past that goes back to the period even before the war, makes it relevant to consider the significance of the SFF, not only within the geographic confines of the contemporary nation but also within the Balkans. Particularly given the history of warfare

between the nations, and the converging ethnic relations (particularly in the case of Bosnian- ethnic Croats and Serbs) it is imperative to examine the dialogue that the SFF begins within South East Europe, and the way this helps reconcile Bosnia's own identity.

Film scholar, Dina Iordanova explains that the Balkan region can be conceptualized as a "cultural entity" that is often viewed (by the West) in terms of its difference from the rest of Europe. (Iordanova) In a region that is trying politically, culturally, and economically to return to Europe, a large-scale film festival such as the SFF can be viewed as tool that symbolizes the way the countries in this region are today very much relatable and compatible with other nations (particularly Western European ones) within the continent at large. "It may not have begun that way, but the SFF now serves the role of not just increasing tourist dollars, or finding producers for films from its region but, perhaps more essentially, as a way to return the well-earned and, therefore, tragically tarnished, sense of Sarajevo as a cosmopolitan place [the city currently predominantly is inhabited by those who identify as 'Bosniak]: a true European capital that, by association, well-reflects its own country and, indeed, the region that the SFF tries to show off to a wider audience." (Jockims) Thus it is evident that in an effort to achieve a more 'European' status, the SFF strives to perpetuate a certain acceptable national, as well as regional identity. Given the past tensions between the Bosnia, and the rest of this region (specifically Serbia and Croatia), the very attempt of the SFF to present a peaceful image of the region seems like a positive step in proposing a more harmonized, new imagination within the nation itself. Given its own complex roots, the SFF "seems to be particularly well poised to carry out the work of articulating Balkan and Bosnian cultural space to itself and to others. The SFF is still confronted by a host of problems and obstacles, but as director Purivatra writes, 'we are

used to working under the constant pressure of crisis, present in BiH at least as long as the Festival itself, and to such an extent that we have almost failed to notice it becoming a global state.” (Ibid) Thus, if the SFF was able to withstand the war and its aftermath, it can certainly overcome other obstructions that come its way, in achieving its goals that can lead towards a consensual national identity.

Recognizing the various geo-political visions of the SFF, its format and content become relevant. As Turan reminds, “[Jean-Luc] Godard said that cinema is what goes on between the cinema and the audience, and it really goes on here. It is a communal experience.” (Turan 66) The phenomenological experience of the festival is what actualizes its goals, so it is necessary to examine the SFF from this perspective. The festival is annually held through the month of August, and its agenda consists of a Children’s Program, Teen Arena, New Currents, Open Air Cinema, Panorama Documentaries, Regional Competitive programs, and an In Focus Program (which is devoted to regional cinema from the past year). Journalist Steve Pond writes that in Sarajevo, the aftermath of war is visible “in the scars that the city’s buildings still carry, in the minds of its people and in the films that screen at its festival. It’s not hard, for example, to find locals bemoaning the fact that the cinema of the region dwells on the war and its aftermath. ‘I don’t know if the people will ever recover,’ said one staffer, ‘and you see that in the movies.’” (Pond) Given that the SFF was born in the midst of war, conflict as a theme is an inexhaustible subject in the event. John O’ Leary suggests, “cinema as a cultural tool is a powerful healing device, helping society come to terms with the brutality of fighting and dying.” (O’ Leary) Thus, regardless of the depressing persistence of the remnants of war that continue

to haunt citizens of Bosnia, the film festival provides the locals with a cathartic medium through which they can together as a nation, reconcile.

Despite the relatively recent and extremely grotesque nature of the war in Bosnia, the episode did not receive the kind of attention or global condolences through cinema in the way that the World Wars did. That said, one film that stands out in the attention it garnered is Tanovic's Oscar Winning (2002), 'No Man's Land.' The film, which was first screened at the SFF notably, cast a light "upon the complex historical and ethnic background to the conflict, not refraining from the direct presentation of atrocities and war crimes... Tanovic created a remarkably self-assured portrait of the ironies and absurdities of the war, which successfully transcended ethnic bias." (Ibid) The film captures the inherent animosity between a Bosniak, and Bosnian Serb soldier, who face a mutual dilemma, and are unable to achieve any kind of resolution, until they decide to work together. But even when they do, the UN forces, and the media (whose help they seek), fail them, which tragically resurfaces their hate. The film presents a wartime reality that most Bosnians could entirely relate to. Yet, as O'Leary suggests, the film "affirms the biblical principle that all men are sinners who are constantly at war with themselves and others, concepts which rise above local pride. These are common themes, which can be appreciated by both sides, regardless of cultural heritage." (Ibid) Although the film was produced by Tanovic (a 'Bosniak'), it reaches out to all ethnicities, in an unprejudiced manner to remind them of the futility of war, and more significantly, the futility of hate. By showing films such as 'No Man's Land,' citizens of Bosnia are provided the chance to reflect upon the meaninglessness of war, the shared suffering despite what side people were on, and ultimately the importance of a united nation.

The recent 2014 SFF was momentous as it marked the festival's 20th century. The festival consciously acknowledged the addressing of conflict as a theme, to revisit the very beginnings of the SFF. A significant film to consider from this festival is one that also opened the event, "Bridges of Sarajevo." The film dealt with the war and many other aspects of life in the city, including a revisit to a century ago when the first World War was ignited by the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand on a street just a few blocks from festival's own headquarters. This film is a collaborative piece made by thirteen different directors from around Europe, who in their own ways deal with the history of the city, which is shaped by and linked directly with war. "As an anthology, it is typically uneven, but its best moments are small, personal and wrenching: a son who loses the single library book his father was able to save before the National Library was bombed in Marc Recha's episode; the ambulance driver who dreams about buckets of heads in Aida Begic's film; the soccer-playing kid who finds refuge in a graveyard in Ursula Meier's concluding chapter." (Pond) Godard's entry within the film contrasted to the narratives provided by other directors in the way it used abstraction, interspersed with imagery with titles like "ECCE HOMO" and "ACCESS DENIED," and with statements like "the rule for cultural Europe is to organize the death of the art of living." (Ibid) As Godard states in relation to the film, "ethnic cleansing, triumph of commodity, dictatorship of spectacular images whirled over in a hellish ballet, in which epicenter the city found itself. Yet Sarajevo promised the opposite, that's why it deserves this melancholic salutation." (Godard) The personal vision of the city, offered by a myriad of directors from within and outside Bosnia, to the visitors of the festival (particularly the Bosnian nationals), in Sarajevo is a powerful tool to negotiate identity. The very notion of viewing films about war in the same site that once endured it,

and continues to suffer its repercussions, makes it therapeutic in the way it engages an international dialogue within and about the state. In addition to other films centered on Bosnia's war, the festival also showed war films from other countries, such as "'Cure — The Life of Another' from Croatia, 'Three Windows and a Hanging' from Kosovo, 'Macondo' from Chechnya, 'Maidan' from the Ukraine." (Pond) This furthermore also allows citizens who have endured war to realize that the reality of war is one that can be shared with other nations too, allowing for a more global conversation to influence the nation's sense of its own identity. While war-cinema is interesting in a phenomenological manner in Bosnia, particularly when films about war are screened in a place that suffered war, in a festival born in the midst of war, and in front of people who survived it, it is worth noting the significance of other types of cinema in the festival to the nation's identity too.

The SFF also features films that deal with a variety of other genres and styles, and reflect different national backgrounds. The line-up has included, Richard Linklater's 'Boyhood,' Woody Allen's 'Magic in the Moonlight,' Polish Oscar entry 'Ida' and the Cannes Festival titles such as 'Leviathan,' 'Winter Sleep' and 'White God,' among many others. It is most interesting to consider the Children's Programme that "pays a special attention to the youngest ones, with its goal being the education and animation of the youngest audience." (SFF) By showcasing cinema that can entertain all segments of society, particularly the most innocent, is a significant contribution to the realization of a national identity in post-war Bosnia. In reference to the Children's Programme, Scholar, Brian J Požun expressed, "children from the Republika Srpska interacted with their counterparts from the Croat-Muslim Federation," a sure sign a united enjoyment. (Požun) As Turan also expresses, "to witness the power of unadulterated enjoyment film can provide to experience

the resilience of children is to believe Sarajevo's permanent renewal is possible after all.” (Turan 108) The very nature the SFF as a mode of entertainment that provides humor, fictional drama, and a sense of community offers a new element to what Bosnia is culturally about, in the present day. This is an important and celebratory realization for the citizens of the nation, who can through the SFF, experience how war (and effectively its causes) is definitely in their past.

Elizabeth Czach argues that “film festivals and programming mandates contribute to global film culture, to the life of film festival host cities, as well as to the success of individual films and filmmakers...Each of the forums undoubtedly plays a role in the formation of that specific country's national cinema culture as well as its reception and reputation abroad.” (Czach 84) While this undeniably is true in the case of the SFF, it is interesting to consider the way the film festival in the city, can more explicitly contribute to the negotiation of national identity, through the construction of a national cinema. Stephen Crofts expresses that “national identity in film is a concept that concerns a nation telling its unique stories through cinema to the rest of the world. (Crofts 385) Thus, the presence of films made by regional directors in the SFF is deemed crucial, particularly as a way to differentiate ‘Bosnian cinema,’ from others. As scholar, Claire Reynolds states, “cinema is in fact is a very powerful tool for constructing nationhood and defining a culture, setting it apart from other countries through promoting an ‘other’ cinema. The identity of a nation [tends] to be associated with territorial space, ‘the shared identity of the naturalized inhabitants of a particular political-geographical space- when considering nationhood, assumptions arise of unity and coherence, where the lives of the people and the stories told through film are fused in one entity – that everybody is living through the same

experiences.” (Reynolds 2) In the case of the SFF, this restates the importance of having a specific national cinema that can allow citizens to reimagine and reconsider the way they associate, in terms of identity relations. Particularly given that national identity is ever changing and progressing, and effectively national cinemas are also constantly ‘evolving with the ebb and flow of nation-states,’ cinema particularly through the regular, and institutionalized SFF becomes significant as a “vehicle for constructing images of a unified national identity.” (Ezra 168, Triana-Toribio 9) In the SFF, films made by ‘Bosnian’ directors who relate to regional identities, negotiate with (amongst other types of films) reactionary identities projected through films that foreign directors showcase, of the region. Given that both types of films concern the region (Bosnia) itself, a sense of nationhood becomes central to the festival- as national identity (particularly as seen in Chapter 1) is ultimately concerned with the ability of the country to present its unique stories to the world, becoming self-conscious of its unique self in the process.

To specifically consider the SFF’s ‘In Focus’ programme that brings regional cinema to light is essential. International film festival scholar, Ruby Rich suggested that “selecting films for a national spotlight is highly politicized because of the “fraught of the nation” and the ‘imagined community’ that it must service,” invoking Anderson’s conception of identity. (Rich) She further asserts that “films in a national spotlight program are often seen as conforming to a political or national agenda and thus as being judged not solely on the merits of quality.” (Ibid) This may be because a ‘national spotlight,’ in its entirety is expected to reflect the cinematic production of a whole nation and so must represent a diversity of genres and practices. Consequently, films selected for inclusion in a program such as the “In Focus” in the SFF might be selected not only in terms of quality or

taste but because they are “representative” and adhere to a political agenda of what is good for the nation and good for [Bosnian] film. (Czach) In this manner, it can be argued that while the “In Focus” Programme may not necessarily project the most accurate depiction of ‘Bosnian Cinema,’ from the artistic standpoint, it might present in-fact what is best for the nation’s shared identity. Thus the SFF is immediately associated with the perpetuation of a national cinema, which is associated with a national identity.

Nebojša Jovanović, states that “Bosnian cinema is merely one among the post-Yugoslav national-cinema entities that establishes itself through an allegedly distinct cinematic cannon and an ethno-national aesthetic.” (Jovanović) In contrast to the other post-Yugoslav cinemas, Bosnian cinema remains undefined due to ethno-national identity conflicts between Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs. Unsurprisingly then, there is a higher volume of ‘Croatian,’ or ‘Serbian,’ as opposed to ‘Bosnian Cinema.’ With that in mind, it can also be argued that the negotiation of a ‘Bosnian Cinema,’ would also imply a negotiation between ethnic-identities within the nation.

‘Bosnian’ cinema has undergone many fluctuations since 1992, triggered by war, the subsequent shutting down of production houses, and the lack of financial support both from the state and privately. These were just a few hindrances to the advancement of the nation’s cinematographic tradition in the early nineties. While its neighboring countries Serbia and Croatia were developing their national cinemas, Bosnia was lagging behind due to its cultural and economic conditions. That said, ‘Bosnian’ film, was successful in presenting itself through a number of documentaries during the 90s, during the siege and after. While war seriously hampered Bosnia’s production of feature films, it provided inspiration and

content for documentary films. Throughout the nineties, even after the war in Bosnia, documentary remained a prominent genre, and many present-day Bosnian filmmakers had their debuts within documentary, including Žalica with *Godot-Sarajevo* (1993) and *Children Like Any Other* (*Djeca kao i sva druga*, 1995), Tanović's *L'Aube* (1996) and *Awakening* (1999), Žbanić's *After, After* (1997) and *Red Rubber Boots* (2000). (Ibid) These directors in the recent times have also made award winning feature films that have become “high watermarks of contemporary Bosnian cinema.” (Ibid)

Present-day ‘Bosnian’ film is closely tied to the SFF. Bosnian director Žalica noted in 2011, that his career as a filmmaker is closely linked with the festival, and that as long as he makes films, they will be linked to the SFF. (Nataša Milas) With the festival's growth, every year sees the premier of a major Bosnian feature, either as the opening film or the festival's ‘In Focus’ film. The lack of proper funding in Bosnia has led to films being coproduced with other houses in the region and beyond. Most films produced in Bosnia are made in collaboration with several European production companies. Bosnian film has been a full participant in the new trend of “‘cinema of normalization,’ reflecting Bosnia's economic and political attempts to return to normalcy.” (Ibid) Thus, it can be argued that the SFF provides a channel through which cinema can be used to bring about a shift in political ideology within the nation.

The 18th Sarajevo Film Festival in 2012, launched with Aida Begić's second feature film ‘Children of Sarajevo’ —“a film that has recently received a special distinction award in the section, *Un Certain Regard* at the 65th Cannes Film Festival in May 2012.” (Ibid) The film transports viewers back to the time of the siege of Sarajevo, employing actual

homemade footage of the war. Angelina Jolie's 'In the Land of Blood and Honey,' that was also shown at the festival revealed a more foreign outlook on the war, and its aftermath, also adding a dimension of Hollywood glamor to the festival itself. The two films "provided the viewer with a new perspective on the war that has marked their (the directors') and our (the viewers') generation: [they] bring the Bosnian war back to the forefront of discussion, symbolically (and cinematographically)." Thus, it can be mapped over the years, that the SFF has emerged as a space where artists representing any segment of Bosnia, the Balkans and the world can participate in a continued discussion, pertaining to the war- its causes and consequences. This contributes towards the development of cinema as a way to involve the political minds of the 'Bosnians.'

Ultimately, the SFF by virtue of its background and development can address the notion of national identity within Bosnia through a continuous process of reflection and negotiation. Its existence and function is symbolic of a nation-wide celebration that transcends ethnic divides between Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats, given the governmental support, and extensive local participation that it receives. This is also indicative of the influence of art institutions, as soft power bodies, can have on the political minds in the nation. The SFF addresses national identity in a two-fold manner: through the films it shows, and through its very presence in Bosnia. In reference to Kassel's Documenta, scholar Andrew Weiner argued that "as an event whose initial objectives were museal and mnemonic, Documenta was in a unique position to both neutralize and instrumentalize the past...In doing so, it projected an image of history that artfully sutured politics and aesthetics." (Weiner 107) The SFF as a comparable art institution in Bosnia, similarly possess the ability to connect the past (war), with the present in a way that can allow for a

peaceful reconciliation to occur. The films it shows over the years, include documentaries by regional, and international directors who together address post-war Bosnia (amongst other themes). The SFF can then, effectively render “home [Bosnia] as a site where the past was effectively domesticated in the fantasy of restored community.” (Ibid) The phenomenological meaning that the SFF acquires by its presence in the city is thus, perhaps more powerful in addressing national identity, than the content of the films themselves. The very realization of the city, as a representative of the nation, as a site for global cultural activity and conversation, can cultivate a deeper connectedness and pride towards Bosnia. The essence of the nation as a site for cultural diplomacy definitely also contributes toward reshaping the sense of a national imagination.

The SFF, as an art institution, has its limitations when it comes to the extent to which it can generate a renewed, or more united sense of national identity in Bosnia, considering the distance that it might still have with a majority of citizens who might not engage with cinema– but it undoubtedly is successful in serving as a long-term platform, where such an identity can be negotiated. While the SFF does directly address post-war identity, it is disputably not sufficient to singularly address the history before the war and independence that also truly shapes the sense of national identity, due to its temporal and international structure. This calls for an examination of the museums and public art that are much more specific to the nation and its greater history. (See Chapter 3)

Overall, the SFF successfully reveals how an art institution (particularly an international one) within the nation is capable of connecting war-time realities to the present in a post-conflict society to renegotiate a sense of identity, by virtue of local, and foreign art that addresses the site in multiple ways. Consequently, a new imagination of this site is

realized that is essential in affecting one's sense of connectedness to the place. Thus, the institution allows art to take on the role of phenomenal exploitation to make people (in Bosnia, for instance) who are still suffering from post-war tensions and trauma reconsider the point of holding on the animosities in the present day, and buy into a renewed sense of identity. This reinforces the power of art institutions as soft power bodies. Thus, where political bodies that more so relate to governance (hard power), fail to address certain ideas within society, art and other cultural institutions (soft power) are able to step in.

Chapter 3

Museums and Public Art: Renegotiating the complex past

In the culmination of its war, Bosnia drove into the present using a shortsighted rear-view mirror, and a fogged windshield. The Dayton Agreement froze the ethnic divides into a constitution as a way to end the bloodshed, but concurrently created a state that until today struggles to move on from the same tensions that caused the war itself. The war in Bosnia arguably destroyed much more than human life. Scholar András Riedlmayer states that “amidst the reports of human suffering and atrocities, another tragic loss has gone largely unnoted: the destruction of the written record of Bosnia’s past.” (Riedlmayer) Effectively, the nation, following its independence from Yugoslavia, has been denied the chance to revisit a majority of its pre-war written history, where the roots of the conflict, and the possibilities for a permanent reconciliation truly lie. A hazy view of this past (compounded by the fact that different ethnic groups believe different narratives) paves a hazier future, and consequently renders the present stagnant, and uncertain.

While the Venice Biennale, and the Sarajevo Film Festival serve as the type of art institutions that engage Bosnia and the world in a conversation about the nation’s contemporary identity, and can also in a phenomenological manner, intimate a spatial imagination of its territory; it is essential for the past to be renegotiated in order to facilitate an effective discussion of a ‘Bosnian’ identity. This opens up the necessity to consider the influence of museums within Bosnia, which can “enact a certain closure of the historical, even as [they represent] history.” (Weiner)

Scholar Sharon Macdonald argues that “museums, along with other public institutions, were an expressive site and agency of some of these new ways of thinking and of public culturing.” (Macdonald) Variables within a museum, such as the material on display, chronological schemes, interpretive texts, and maps are capable of influencing the ways in which the nation is represented to visitors. Macdonald proposes that museums can articulate “two temporal narratives: one, a distinctive national trajectory and two, the nation as a final triumphant stage of successive progression. Moreover, they could also accommodate a third: the immemorial. As a repository and display center for material of cultural significance, the museum would seem an inviting arena for investigating expressions of identity shared by a nation’s people.” (Ibid) In the case of post-war Bosnia, these narrative capabilities that museums possess, could attempt to readdress national myths that propose a shared identity between the Bosniaks, ethnic Croats, ethnic Serbs, and other minority communities within the nation- to allow the cosmopolitan nature of the country to become a characteristic that generates pride, instead of remorse. To achieve this, museums could honor significant moments in time, act as a symbol of national culture, and in the most literal manner- use objects on display as a means to negotiate an imagination of the nation in unison.

As Macdonald explains, museums as sites could be appropriated as ‘national’ expressions of identity through the idea of ‘having a history’ – a collective memory. While this does not insinuate that all that is exhibited has to be ‘of the nation,’ ‘national’ artifacts and art works are definitely an important component. That said, “‘having a museum’ was itself a performative utterance of possessing an identity.” (Macdonald) Anderson recognizes processes such as political “museum- izing” and “logoization” that antiquities go through to

transform into national symbols. (Anderson 182-183) Scholar, Evan Taylor describes that such objects might be removed from their original context, and become subjects of “infinitely replicable written reports and photographs,” effectively transformed into signifiers of time. (Taylor 4) When objects are displayed in museums, they provide visitors the opportunity to experience the nation’s history. This reaffirms a sense of common heritage by allowing visitors to engage in their shared culture. (Macdonald 2) This also invites local visitors, to recognize their nation as different from others, as they confront their collective pasts that are distinctly different from other sovereign states, particularly in the 20th century. (Ibid) The nation’s distinctness can be further affirmed if the museum has galleries with material from other nations or cultures, too. Arguably, thus, museums create a context for objects (artifacts, structures, art works) to meaningfully contribute towards the concept of national identity.

Michel Foucault categorizes the museum as “a heterotopia : a space of difference that is linked to the accumulation of time.” (Foucault 26) Scholar Beth Lord furthers Foucault’s categorization, viewing the museum as both - “a space of difference, and a space of representation.” (Lord 3) Effectively, museums provide a space where objects can be made more eternally relevant. This creates a gap between the objects and their original contexts, allowing museum visitors to conjure meaningful interpretations, intertwining the past and the present, within a broader framework of things. (Lord 5-7). Scholar, Evan Taylor states that “historical museums may be more likely to offer interpretations to the visitor, through media as text panels, audio-visual material, or dioramas,” that he characterizes as “interpretive material.” (Taylor 4) Historical museums thus attempt to explicitly bridge gaps for the visitors, as the interpretive material can direct the visitor’s

own interpretation of the objects. Conversely, in an art museum, “there are seldom long text panels describing the intended meaning of a painting. The artist and the museum are inviting the visitor to be critical of the painting, and to make meaning of it to bridge the gap between object and concept.” (Ibid) Particularly in relation to the case of post-war Bosnia, the distinction between historical and art museums is relevant to the construction of a national identity.

Museums are conventionally associated with the expression of a single national identity. As nation-states recognize multi-cultural communities, traditional modes of representation in museums are challenged. The notion of a ‘Bosnian’ identity implies an amalgamation of different ethnic identities. Scholar Flora Kaplan questions: “Will museums continue to define national identity, or will they represent a collectivity or a multiplicity of competing ethnic, religious, and/or ideological groups in a physical space? ... Will national identity survive or only museums and identity, redefined? ... Identity (variously defined and hyphenated) serves, increasingly, as a fulcrum for group relations in existing nation-states and the more so today across national boundaries.” (Kaplan 168) Particularly given the pre-existing strong ethnic identification in Bosnia, the imposition of a single national identity on other groups within the state could create feelings of alienation and resistance (Kaplan 153). Effectively, certain groups may wish to project their alternative narratives to others in order to gain recognition and strengthen ethno-national status. This makes museum representation even more controversial, as the very presence of competing national communities, will predictably create competition between the communities for the representation of their alternative histories; as is the situation in Bosnia.

Of the three major ethnic communities in Bosnia, scholar Steven Oluic¹ argues that

the members of the Bosniak group have exhibited the strongest desire to integrate the cultural entities into one, and consequently, many identify themselves and all other groups simply as Bosnian. (Oluć 149) Oluć further asserts that spatially Bosniak identity imagines the entire territory of the Bosnian state, while ethnic Croats and Serbs maintain connections only with particular areas of the Bosnian landscape [Herzegovina, and Republika Srpska] (Oluć 157). This is complicated because it suggests that although the nation is territorially represented as one on global platforms, the consciousness of identity towards the space is different and fragmented within the nation. This raises the question- how can museums possibly create a new imagination that resonates with members of all groups, collectively? Once again, returning to the history, even if a fragmented one- becomes significant.

Taylor examined the structure of The National Museum of Bosnia- Herzegovina (NMBH) and the Historical Museum of Bosnia-Herzegovina (HMBH), both of which are historical museums in Sarajevo, in relation to national identity. He concluded that “whereas the [NMBH] exhibits attempts to expose the origins of a Bosnian national identity and some of its contemporary characteristics, the [HMBH] is committed to proving Bosnia-Herzegovina’s right to exist as a nation with deep historical roots.” (Taylor 13) The narrative of belonging that is presented by each museum is essentially the same, although the motive behind doing so remains slightly different. “These two museums project a single national identity with the aim of including all Bosnian peoples. Rather than using the names of contemporary ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina, archaeological, historical, and ethnographic displays use the umbrella term ‘Bosnian.’ The use of this term aligns the desire for a united nation- state, expressed mainly by Bosniaks and the international community.” (Ibid) Regardless of the attempt to mirror a ‘Bosnian’ consciousness, the

absence of a majority of artifacts from certain periods of the country's history, and the fact that all people in Bosnia do not accept this vision of the nation, challenge the museums' success in creating a sense of a national identity.

Scholar Sten Engelstoft also argues that the desire for national unity in Bosnia is purely a form of Bosniak nationalism, as this unity is strongly rejected by other ethnic groups. Conventionally, Croat and Serb national identities are based on the concept of shared blood, while a Bosniak identity is based on a shared environment and culture. (Engelstoft, Prodic, Robinson 962) Effectively, ethnic Croats and Serbs might be deemed less likely to embrace the 'Bosnian' identity, which is based on a shared past, rather than blood. Following the war, the reconstruction of the NMBH in the early 2000s was a European Union- funded project, suggesting the international community's involvement in deciding the way that a Bosnian culture and history would be represented. Given the distance between the reality of the museum, and the national consciousness amongst the citizens of the country, Robert Hayden recommends that the global community must avoid imposing a Bosnian identity on all people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, arguing, "they need help rebuilding real, not symbolic, lives." (Hayden 107) He firmly believes that the notion of a Bosnian community with multicultural co- existence emerged only when Bosniaks began seeking international support towards the end of the war, while in reality at least half of Bosnia's people reject this view. (Hayden 112) Considering this disparity, one may question if it is appropriate for museums to even represent a 'Bosnian' narrative of belonging that so many people reject.

I argue that, although the notion of a unified identity may not seem to align with the beliefs of every ethnic group in Bosnia, it is important not to immediately question the national narratives depicted in museums. Given the poor economy, high unemployment, and persisting resentment between ethnic groups, a sense of national unity, even if not desired by many, can exemplify how a realization of a historic Bosnian culture, can pave a path to a thriving future. (Taylor 13) Although it might be problematic for a museum to impose a single national identity on the entire populace, it is would be even more divisive to represent three separate national narratives (for each ethnicity). This does define the current state of museum affairs in Bosnia. For instance, Banja Luka, the capital of the Republika Srpska canton, has its own regional museum that presents a different national narrative the National Museum at Sarajevo. (Ibid) Ultimately, while museums in general do attempt to offer narratives that propose cultural homogeneity, continuity, and national pride, they are capable of becoming a bit too exclusive in a country like Bosnia. Perhaps it is possible to represent multiple narratives in the museum environment in Bosnia, but this would require the “initiative of governing bodies, curators, and a more accepting audience.” (Ibid) Given the various hindrances that national, historical museums in the nation face in generating a significant conversation about national identity, I believe that art museums, and public art, can serve as a more appropriate and capable mediums to re-visualize history, memorialize the more recent past, and negotiate the conflicted senses of identity.

It is necessary to first and foremost recap the motives and incidents that led to the erasure of significant remnants of the nation’s history during the war. In August 1992, Serb nationalist forces burned down Bosnia’s National Library that was constructed in the 1890s on the Sarajevo riverfront. This destroyed over 155,000 rare books and manuscripts, the

country's national archives, copies of newspapers, periodicals, books published in Bosnia, and the collections of the University of Sarajevo. Riedlmayer quoted an ABC news report, where a concerned citizen stated, “a lot of our heritage, national heritage, lay down there in ashes.” (Riedlmayer) Along the lines of this incident, Sarajevo’s Oriental Institute that used to be “home to the largest collection of Islamic and Jewish manuscript texts and Ottoman documents in Southeastern Europe, was also shelled and burned. Serbian forces also destroyed ‘The Archives of Herzegovina,’ housing manuscripts and records documenting the region’s past since the medieval period.” (Ibid) Thousands of books from the library of Mostar’s Roman Catholic archbishop, the Museum of Herzegovina, and the University of Mostar Library met similar fates. Riedlmayer argues that throughout Bosnia, libraries, archives, museums and cultural institutions were “targeted for destruction, in an attempt to eliminate the material evidence books, documents and works of art that could remind future generations that people of different ethnic and religious traditions once shared a common heritage in Bosnia.” (Ibid) Thus the eradication of edifices that possibly suggested alignments between the ethnic identities in Bosnia, were done so in order to deliberately eliminate shared memories between the groups. In studying national identity, Anderson seeks to explicate the means through which citizens can imagine themselves as a community based on common interests and a collective understanding of heritage. This sense of heritage (more specifically- the remains after the destruction in the war) could surely be addressed and memorialized by museums in present day Bosnia. Yet, despite a number of symbolic achievements towards repairing and reconstructing the burnt down structures, Bosnia and Herzegovina's major cultural institutions, including the National Museum, the Art Gallery and the National Film Archive, are today in a state of neglect.

In mid-January 2012, many national cultural institutions in Bosnia, including the Historical Museum of Bosnia- Herzegovina, were closed due to severe funding cuts. These cuts resulted from disagreements between the entity governments as to the representation of Bosnian nationality to museum audiences. As a post on a protesting online-forum, 'Culture Shutdown'⁷ stated- "the State does not support them, because doing so would imply acknowledging the existence of a common cultural and historical heritage." (CultureShutdown) Scholar, Robert Donia also confirmed that the shut down of the institutions, attacks the country's shared memory and can be interpreted as a continuation of the destruction of the possibility of a united identity. (Donia) As journalist, Marzia Bona states, "memory institutions in Sarajevo and throughout BiH have since been subject to an attack that is less obvious, but no less dangerous. Since the mid-nineties, cultural institutions have become an instrument of national identification in each of the former Yugoslav republics. Not so in BiH, because of the potential problems in recognizing and establishing a national identity to act as a glue for the entire country." (Bona) Bona further expressed that due to the discrepancies within the government, seven institutions that could have been capable of addressing the topic of a collective memory were closed down, more so, revealing an effort to deny the existence of a shared culture and history that constitute an element of legitimacy of the country itself. (Bona) Thus, while Bosnia-Herzegovina remains an extremely fragile state, still divided on ethnic lines despite the Dayton Accords, it is interesting to consider how the weakening of national historical institutions reflect upon self-identification among those that identify as Bosnian, and whether stronger regional

⁷ The Platform CULTURESHUTDOWN.NET was founded in 2012 by Azra Akšamija and Maximilian Hartmuth, joined by a group of academicians, artists, librarians and other activists from Bosnia-Herzegovina and other countries in the Balkans, and other parts of the world. They are a global, non-profit network of cultural producers who aim to "unite, on the global level to help prevent destruction of cultural heritage that belongs to all the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and enriches World heritage."

identities, and regional institutions, emerge. While those in support of a 'Bosnian' identity (mostly the Bosniaks) may contest for the reopening of the 'national' institutions, other groups might feel differently. Thus where historical museums in particular have their limitations in the dialogue of a national identity due to their destruction during the war, their shut downs, and the potential for the perpetuation of more divisive ethno-national narratives, it is worth considering the significance of art museums and public art in Bosnia.

The Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia (1905-1945) resulted in a shift in 'Bosnian' art from a focus on traditional approaches to art towards a more Western European style, influenced by "Symbolism from Vienna, Expressionism from Munich and Impressionism from Prague." (About Bosnia) A number of works from this and later periods could be found at the Art Gallery of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Sarajevo. In the 1950s Bosnian art also became influenced by modernist techniques, giving birth to an authentic 'Bosnian' school that could connote with identity constructions by reflecting public imaginations. Institutions, public discussions and other projects raised the general standard of the field in centers such as Mostar, Banja Luka, and Tuzla. The Sarajevo Fine Arts Academy was established in 1972, which also gave rise to a new generation of artists who shook the art scene through the eighties. During the siege of Sarajevo in 1992, "maintaining cultural work became a form of resistance in itself, and it was possible to attend exhibitions, theatrical and musical events and the cinema through the war." (Ibid) Although Bosnian institutions were isolation from global cultural achievements in the midst of the war, independent centers such as the Sarajevo Centre for Contemporary Arts (SCCA), Obala Art Centre, played a significant role in providing contemporary art education. "In order to bridge the information gap between international and local artists, these centers offered workshops, financial aid

and courses in contemporary art mediums currently not available at the Sarajevo Art Academy.” (Ibid) Ultimately, it was the Dayton Agreement that put a pause on the progression of the national arts in Bosnia, as the horrors of the consequence of war made stripped a sense of identity out of many. Given that the war threw Bosnia off an artistic trajectory that also facilitated an explicit and continuous negotiation of the nation’s individuality, it is worth considering contemporary developments that aim to return Bosnia onto a similar course that it had historically paved for itself.

One such art institution that contemporarily evokes a history of the nation’s identity is the Ars Aevi Museum of Modern Art, in Sarajevo. The Ars Aevi project began as an “outcome of the collective international will and ethical cooperation between artists, curators, museums and institutions in Europe and beyond, [with the aim] to advance the idea that the cultural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of the world as a whole are a single space without borders in the broader context of promoting the wealth and value of what we have in common, as well as of the specific features of Bosnia and Herzegovina's cultural identity.” (Mozaik Foundation) Sarajevo, where the cultures of the east and west have met and co-existed throughout history functions as an ideal space to re-project the sense of multiculturalism that the city and the nation can embrace once again, through art. During the war in 1992, “in an expression of cultural resistance, a group of intellectuals and enthusiasts led by Enver Hadžiomerspahić came up with the idea of building a Museum of Modern Art, the nucleus of which was to become the Ars Aevi Collection...The combination of the artistic value of the Ars Aevi Collection, the unique architectural design by Renzo Piano, an architect who has designed museums for our times, the support of UNESCO, the European Union and international partners, and the commitment and

cooperation of local authorities, ministers and institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, makes Ars Aevi a project of universal significance.” (Ibid) Connecting the development of the museum to national identity, journalist, Amina Hamzic expressed that “Its completely natural that every urban environment has its own museum for contemporary art, not as a space to display luxury, but as a space in which the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina can legitimize itself.” (Hamzic) Hamzic quoted artist Nebojsa Seric Shoba who stated that “a country without a built culture, which we currently don't have, is doomed to failure. We can't be a real country until we are able to prove that our cultural identity is strong, he continued.” (Ibid) Hamzic establishes an argument pertaining to how the Ars Aevi Museum would function as more than just a mere space that displays art works. Artist Alija Hafizović-Haf also claimed that “Artists and other backers of the project say that the new museum will function as a beacon, setting new standards and enshrining values that the whole of society can aspire to. The idea is that it will function as a key indicator that Bosnia is capable of being an equal actor in culture as well as in all other fields of civilized behavior.” (Ibid) Thus, by functioning as an institution that can once again create a trajectory of a Bosnian national (and modern) art, that can be placed within a historical context and dialogue, the Ars Aevi symbolizes the influence that art museums can have on the discussion of a national identity in the aftermath of war. The development of a modernist art tradition is also significant in renegotiating national imaginations, as confirmed by scholar, Claudia Mesch, who (in the example of post- war Germany) argued that modern art exhibitions “strove to rehabilitate contemporary art [in Germany] and counter the atmosphere of ignorance of the international art scene and anti-modernism set in place during the Nazi era.” (Mesch 2-3) Thus museums, in promoting modern art, appear to

have the ability to allow citizens to reconsider problematic, or other divisive narratives, particularly of the kind that remain predominant in Bosnia.

Art museums in a post-conflict society also have the ability to powerfully memorialize and address the conflict itself in a manner that can intimately impact the way the national construct is perceived. In the case of Bosnia, the Project Biennial of Contemporary Art, D-0 ARK Underground in Konjic, Bosnia and Herzegovina that will open in April 2015 for the third time, exemplifies this ability. The museum, set up inside an atomic bunker, which belongs to the Ministry of Defense conserves the building and its history and simultaneously provide space for a future collection of contemporary art. The Project Biennial is thus “a hybrid museum as a result of the merger of a military museum and contemporary art museum.” (Project Biennial) The project is inspired by a nuclear shelter, which is an example of a military object today, rendered dysfunctional at the end of war. The organizers of the biennial “believe that contemporary visual art can save the bunker from the inevitable disappearance and thus save extraordinary artifact of Yugoslavia’s socialist past, Cold War era and global paranoia of nuclear war.” (Ibid) In conversation with the artworks exhibited, the bleak but historic nature of the bunker becomes accentuated, and can attract not just those interested in art, but also people who are inclined towards understanding military and political history. Effectively this Biennial depicts a “simultaneous experience of hard fact and its reflections in the works,” allowing a profound reconsideration of a history before the relatively recent war. The “Project Biennial is an attempt to transform not only the bunker but also the priorities of society. It is an attempt to bring artists from the Balkans back together and to reconnect Sarajevo with the world. Atomic shelter, which has for years been the secret, awakens the curiosity of

ordinary citizens.” (Ibid) The very notion of the biennale as a ‘project,’ as suggested by its title, expresses the very nature of the concept- where art takes on a process oriented approach to continuously work towards reconstructing an imagination of the nation that was lost during conflict. Curator, Adela Demetja expressed that “projects like this are important and that this biennial, which takes place in a small country, is very successful because it does not allow itself to be reduced to a temporary, international event format, but ensures sustainability and has a positive effect on the local and regional art scene. [In the upcoming exhibition] we want to present alternative approaches and developments that have come into being since the cold war era...So the biennial will theme the growth of critical social discourses and alternative models of living during the cold war era, as well as their effects on our present life contexts. The focus here is on people who have come up with new visions or suggested alternatives, and thus enabled us to believe in a better world.” (Demetja) Thus, by revisiting a period of shared history before the war in Bosnia occurred, and tying it to the present through contemporary art, the Biennial can appeal to locals all over the nation- to facilitate a potential dialogue amongst citizens, regardless of ethnic identity.

It is necessary to recognize that particularly in a state like Bosnia- excessive bureaucracy and the lack enough public funding towards cultural institutions inhibits the potential for art museums to truly flourish in the manner that they ideologically can. That said, “the lack of gallery space in Sarajevo after the war was turned into an advantage by some of Sarajevo’s leading artists, who have since used the city itself as their exhibiting space. Hence public art, site-specific art and installation became, and still are, a rather familiar scene in Sarajevo and the rest of the nation.” (About Bosnia) While on the one

hand, contemporary Bosnian artists including, Nebojsa Seric Shoba, Maja Bajevic, Danica Dakic, Kurt&Plasto, Sejla Kamic, etc., have played an important role in the international art world, bringing their particular experience of war, migration and loss to a global platform, public art unravels the nation's persistent and inclusive effort to regain its "previous cultural vibrancy." (Ibid)

To consider the relevance of public art- Americans for the Arts, a national non-profit, recognized in a 2012 report that "public art is a distinguishing part of our public history and our evolving culture...It provides an intersection between past, present and future, between disciplines, and between idea." (Americans for the Arts) The report further states that "there is a public art continuum that appreciates the varied creative intentions and roles that artists may bring to a project. Artists may be invited by an official entity, a project may be artist-initiated, or work may take the form of a non-sanctioned artistic endeavor. However, artists inevitably bring personal and distinctive interpretations to each idea, site, social construct, and aesthetic potential. In this way, artists can be social and civic leaders, advocating through art for alternative perspectives that can challenge assumptions, beliefs, and community values." (Ibid) To put these theories into the context of contemporary Bosnia- it is important to consider some of the noteworthy examples of public art in Bosnia.

"The scars of war are still clear on the streets on Bosnia: the "Sarajevo rose" has been painted anywhere bombs landed and killed more than three people; occasional buildings that sustained damage were never rebuilt; bullet holes still pockmark some structures; alleys of antique dealers have fashioned vases, key chains, pens and a variety of other objects out of shell casings." (Pond) The 'Sarajevo Roses,' have been exemplary in

memorializing the destruction caused by the Siege in Sarajevo. 'Sarajevo Rose' is the name given to the pattern created when a mortar shell exploded on concrete. As a memorial to those killed during the siege of Sarajevo, many of these explosion scars have been filled with red resin, and since 2013, authorities have begun officially to protect them Sarajevo Roses. While there remains a continuing debate about whether or not they should remain anonymous, and without explanation, the 'roses,' their symbolic nature in the way they literally freeze a physical remnant of war into a public artwork is undeniable. Scholar, Nerkez Opačin argues that "their anonymity and lack of explanation allows for them to commemorate all the fallen of the war, with quiet dignity." (Opačin) Further, the absence of names, takes away the 'perpetrator-victim' aspect of the war, making its aftermath an event that can be negotiated with in a manner that involves collective thought amongst ethnicities as opposed to further remorse cause by persisting accusations. "Memorialization can be a powerful tool in peace education and peace building. It enables people to explore different ways to deal with difficult wartime memories, to challenge dominant historical narratives, and to question conventional concepts of identity." By preserving the 'Sarajevo Roses' as a site for public memory that is encountered on a daily basis, perhaps also allows society to collectively reconcile from the long-term trauma caused by the war. The war that is memorialized through public art, can thus be truly placed in the past, to allow for the present day, and future identity of the nation to become less fragmented.

Graffiti art, is another variety of public art that can truly enable citizens (regardless of their interest in art) to contemplate their sense of individual and national identity. Artist, Sejla Kamberic designed a graphic image titled 'Bosnian Girl,' 2003- that was distributed as posters, billboards, magazine ads, postcards, using the graffiti "No teeth...? A mustache...?"

Smell like shit...? Bosnian Girl!” These reflected notes written by an unknown Dutch soldier on a wall of the army barracks in Potocari, Srebrenica, towards the end of the war in Bosnia. The Royal Netherlands Army troops, as part of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992-95, were responsible for protecting the Srebrenica safe area but failed to save 7000 men and boys in this supposedly ‘safe haven.’

Curator Josko Tomasović expressed that “The work of Sejla Kamberić is both intimate and socially engaged, as Kamberić herself stares out at the viewer. She is the Bosnian girl standing in for all women in Bosnia, the disfiguration of a national identity.” (Tomasović)

As Kamberić pointed out- “In my case, I locate this in the image of the scars on the wall from the bullet holes. I survived it, but the scars are there and they are visible, they are obvious—they make me who I am.” (Kamberić) Ultimately, this form of art that is publicly accessible to a wide number of individuals in Bosnia, allows Bosnians to consider the way the past shapes the way they perceive their present identities, while simultaneously rendering a ‘Bosnian’ identity unique from other nationalities. This allows people in Bosnia, regardless of ethnic divides to experience a united conscience in response to the artwork itself.

To contemplate state funded public art, a statue of assassin, Gavrilo Princip, was erected in Sarajevo in 2014, marking the centenary of a famous shooting that triggered the First World War. Serb-nationalist, Gavrilo Princip shot Archduke Franz Ferdinand. The commemorative cultural events in Bosnia that took place in light of this construction, indicated how different historical narratives continue to influence country’s present.

“Separate events were held in two entities, with the Republika Srpska celebrating him as a hero, though in the Federation he was often portrayed as a terrorist” (Pasic) While it can be

argued that just another state funded venture once again, reminded citizens of their differences, I argue that by functioning as a form of public art, the statue of Princip (particularly in the Federation), can open up a more public negotiation pertaining to the divisive nature of contemporary identity construction in Bosnia based on history. Becoming more aware and conscience of the existence of multiple narrative could lead towards a discussion towards a more consensual sense of the past amongst different ethnicities. In this way, public art, can bring the necessary addressal of divisive identities to an open platform, that is present on an everyday basis. Thus, regardless of whether public art is anonymous, made by a specific artist, or is funded by the state, it can fulfill a similar function in terms of national identity- it engages the public (by being accessible to all) consciousness on a daily basis to subtly memorialize the past in a way that allows for a present day negotiation of it. While arguably, public art is outside the institutional framework- in a country like Bosnia, public art (especially the Sarajevo Roses, and the statue of Princip) do contain approval stamps of governing or official bodies- rendering them institutionally approved, even if not 'institutional'.

Particularly in light of the rich, and tumultuous history of Bosnia that is very much intertwined with the history of the Balkan region itself, it is necessary for the nation in its post-war situation to reflect on more than just the war as its most significant event in the past. This is essential to a reconstruction of an identity where every ethnic group can realize its connection or cooperation towards the others that was essentially lost in the war. Recognizing this should lead to an attempt to renew the past relationships, and revive a sense of nationhood that is more accepting of multiplicity.

The Dayton Agreement has been catastrophic in the way that the government

accorded by it has dealt with the preservation of national historic museums that can fulfill the task of visualizing and experiencing history. Especially given the lack of state funding towards such museums, libraries, and the fact that the war destroyed many artifacts, and records - art institutions, and public art are able to fill a necessary void. While literal evidence of the past may have been erased, art institutions and public art can evoke an imagination. Art galleries and museums provide a space for re-creating a 'Bosnian' artistic tradition that can once again be recognized as different from other trajectories, while also literally portraying events and ideas from the past to start a dialogue. Public art on the other hand can be even more powerful by virtue of its accessible nature. While arguably, artistic platforms may not be strong enough to change things, they do open up critical discussions in the public space that are crucial to allow for a consideration of a national consensus. Imagining a past that is beyond the haze of the war, allows for the present to be dominated by the motivation to steer into a future that emerges from more than just conflict. This can also render other contemporary institutions of the nature of the Venice Biennale, and the Sarajevo Film Festival, more effective in addressing and contemplating national identity.

Conclusion

Every post-conflict society has its individual concerns that are very particular to itself. The case of Bosnia is unique in the way that its conflict stemmed from an extremely complex history of ethnic sensitivities instilled by various regimes. In the aftermath of the war, it is necessary for the nation to come to terms with the truth, and to reconcile in a way that allows for peace to be truly made between the Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats. I have established in this thesis that the Dayton Agreement that ended the war and formed the nation as it is today, has failed at constructing a ‘national identity’ that transcends ethnic divides, which I argue is essential for this reconciliation.

The notion of a ‘Bosnian’ identity is a complex one because it is often associated with merely a ‘Bosniak’ identity, which is exclusive to one community in the nation. Yet it is necessary for the three communities to arrive at a consensual understanding in terms of their relationship with one another. While each ethnicity currently imagines the nation through its individual narrative, a collective identity has to be recognized for the country to become less hostile towards minority communities, and more significantly, for it to arrive at a situation where it is more likely to gain the status of an EU membership, that it seeks.

I have to acknowledge that Benedict Anderson’s idea of nationhood that I use in my discussion does have its flaws in the 20th century- given the development of a globalized world that creates cosmopolitan identity. That said, a sovereign national identity is necessary in Bosnia, first and foremost, to get over the post-war hostilities. Arguably, the idea that territories must be held together based on the concept of sovereignty, and integrity- in the case of Bosnia could be viewed as an imperialist imposition. It could be said that the Republika Srpska and Herzegovina are held as a part of ‘Bosnia and Herzegovina’ rather

than Serbia, and Croatia, forcibly by the international community (by virtue of the Dayton Agreement). Although I have deliberately chosen to avoid this matter as it demands a further analysis of the nature of state building and the worldly consequence of separationist movements occurring based on ethnicities (that digresses from the core of my thesis), I have to acknowledge that this perspective exists. I instead chose to focus on the more objective, and contemporary state of Bosnia- where given that governmental and legal constructs fail to truly legitimize the nature of citizenship, art institutions can fulfill the same, as a means to address national identity.

Journalist Susan Pearce eloquently explains, “In no country in Europe is cultural policy more important than in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Culture is both the cause and the solution to its problems. Cultural arguments were used to divide the country, yet culture might be able to bring people back together again through initiating cultural programs and activity that increase mutual understanding and respect.” (Pearce) This reiterates my reason for focusing on art institutions. While enough literature exists to address the way practicing art can be cathartic for individual victim, I argue that institutionalized art, which is still linked to the state, can act as a soft-body power that can be cathartic to the ideological construct of the nation itself. As Benedict Anderson has pointed out, “thinking of oneself as a member of a national public - envisaged like a large ‘team’, ‘family’ or ‘community’ but made up of thousands or millions of people most of whom one would never meet - entailed a particular feat of the imagination.” (Anderson) This imagination requires conjuring sentiments that are beyond individual experience, and can be shared by the community as a whole. Where the state separates the three major ethnic groups in Bosnia, art institutions can, through the perpetuation of a powerful imagination, bring them closer.

One of the most crucial factors that art institutions can address within Bosnia- is the sense of time. Where historic museums are mostly dilapidated, shut down, or have lost a majority of valuable objects that could act as ‘identifiers,’ art museums and public art can allow citizens to contemplate their long-term shared history, that goes beyond the traumas of the war. While this is particularly necessary in the case of Bosnia, it can be generalized to refer to other post-conflict societies too.

Concurrent to functioning as a symbolic memorizer, and instilling a sense of shared history, art institutions (such as the Sarajevo Film Festival) are also capable of creating new traditions that even though, stem out of the war, exist beyond the realm of ethnicity and are thus equally accessible to the nation. This allows such institutions to function as platforms where conflicts can be peacefully negotiated, and discussed, in the presence of other foreign contributors who can offer global perspectives to the dialogue as well. Particularly comparing Bosnia to Germany, the Sarajevo Film Festival is to the nation, what Documenta- has been to Germany. This predicts, only a positive outcome of the SFF’s development to the future of the imagination of a Bosnian identity.

Ultimately, the realization of the nation, as a unique and distinct entity is most crucial, and the nation’s participation in a foreign platform (such as the Venice Biennale) is indicative of this. Not only does national representation confirm the states own consensus, but it also allows the nation to perceive itself as equal to other nations – in the way that it can legitimizes itself, allowing citizens to take pride in a ‘Bosnian’ identity.

While the realm of art, and ordinary life, are on two different planes, there is undoubtedly a certain degree of distance between the two. While art institutions in the case of Bosnia, as well as the rest of the world, are not capable of entirely rehabilitating and

reconciling a society, they do serve a long-term, continuous, and symbolic function, that other platforms are incapable of fulfilling.

The nature of a society at the end of a conflict is so complex that it is impossible to define. Where the definitions do exist, legal and political bodies are able to affect change, but it is the abstract and invisible, but even deeper inner-wounds in a society that art institutions are capable of addressing. To once again reiterate Ben Okri's proposition: "Politics is the art of the possible; creativity is the art of the impossible." Art institutions, as I have studied them, tread the line between the two – and they can be cathartic not to specific individuals but offer a space for catharsis to society as a whole, in the aftermath of mass atrocity.

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Journal notes from my trip to Bosnia

I visited Sarajevo in March 2014, as a part of a Humanitarian Law and Armed Conflict class that I was enrolled in while spending a semester abroad in Copenhagen. It was in reflection of this trip that I conceived of this thesis. Below is a small sample of some of the notes that I took over the course of the trip.

Day 1:

Ironically to the pleasant weather, picturesque scenery, and rainbow that greeted us as soon as we landed in Sarajevo, we were immediately picked up from the airport by a guide, who gave what is called the “*Tour of Misfortune*.” Our guide, who himself had survived the siege in Bosnia, took us to the Tunnel Museum, where we had the opportunity to step into an underground tunnel through which food and other humanitarian supplies were trafficked to help the victims during the siege in Bosnia. The guide told us of his own personal accounts, and of how he was able to escape his own death in that period. We also saw a short film summarizing the war, and its aftermath. The tour, then took us to ‘Sniper Alley,’ a part of the city where we could see remnants of architecture from Yugoslavian times. The destruction from the war was still evident in the buildings. We also visited the Olympic stadium, which was one of the most destroyed spaces during the war. The Olympics were held in Sarajevo in 1984, and it was quite shocking to believe that a city in the conditions we were seeing it, was once such a thriving destination. At the end of the tour, we were taken to a viewpoint on a hill that showed us a beautiful panorama of the city- through this point we could see remnants of the Ottoman rule in the city. While the greenery, and the landscape of the city were beautiful, the number of tombstones and graveyards in sight was alarming. But that is the reality of what took place in Bosnia. Following the tour, we ate dinner at a cozy café in downtown Sarajevo, and enjoyed a traditional Bosnian meal.

Day 2:

The day began with a guided walking tour of the city. We passed by a Catholic church, Serbian Orthodox Church, Mosque, and Synagogue, that were all very near by to one-another, reminding us of the historic diversity within the country. We also passed by the famous bridge where Franz Ferdinand was assassinated, as well as the point from which he was shot. Within a short walk- we walked by Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Communist

constructions. The historic aspect of the city is inescapable. We walked to the American University- where the President gave us a short lecture, breaking down the causes of the war, more significantly- its immediate consequences. It was all very dense to process at once, but the rest of the day filled us with a myriad of perspectives to provide us an in-depth understanding of the conflict. Over the course of the day, we met with member of human rights organizations, visited a synagogue and spoke to a Jewish Representative, and also spoke to a Catholic Priest. We learnt, very quickly that corruption and bureaucracy were some of the prevailing problems in the nation following the war, and despite local efforts, there is a sense of political stagnancy in the nation. The low economy has made, many ordinary citizens “coffee-drinkers” who are essentially unemployed and poor. From the various discussions, we also realized that there seemed to be a huge disconnect between the way activists, and politicians or religious leaders looked at the scenario in the nation. Following a long day, we ate dinner with students from the American University in Bosnia who told us of their own stories- many of them were in refuge in Germany over the course of the war.

Day 3:

Our day began with a visit to the International Commission for Missing Persons. A member of the organization discussed the scientific aspect of finding and identifying bodies in the aftermath of the war. Despite the number of years since the war, it was horrifying that many bodies are still missing, and many are still unidentified. For many individuals who were killed in the war, all that is left of them may very well be a “bone or two.” Following this visit, we met with a Croat Representative from the Parliament, who went over the details of the Dayton Agreement with us. Many of our questions here remained unanswered, or were very vaguely addressed. The information we came out with was mostly factual- that the war was traumatic, and that the Dayton Agreement was necessary at the time it was put in place- despite its complications in the present. The Croat Representative praised the international community for their efforts at the end of the war. Finally we had a long discussion with a member of a “Humanity in Action” project who very strongly criticized the government for perpetuating further hatred between ethnic groups, etc. The member however also detailed and shared with us the idea behind the Children’s Memorial and the Sarajevo Roses, which

were created to memorialize the war. We ended the day with a quiet dinner. Walking down the streets of Sarajevo, it was hard to imagine that the horrors we heard of and saw images of, had occurred in the same areas where we now peacefully strode.

Day 4:

I had never been to Auschwitz, or even closer to home for me- the Jallianwala Bagh, where mass massacres have occurred in the past. But from this days visit to Srebrenica, I can sort of imagine what they would feel like. We took a long bus ride (very scenic, may I add) to Srebrenica, where the major genocide, or ethnic cleansing had occurred in 1995, in the presence of Dutch Peacekeepers. We visited the cemetery, as well as an abandoned warehouse that had functioned once as a site for refuge. We watched a movie about the history of region, and of the genocide. It was deeply painful and disturbing to realize what had taken place in this now- serene and peaceful site, in the midst of the beautiful hills. The most emotional we all felt was when we spoke a to a woman from the “Mother of Srebrenica” organization who lost her husband and sons here. She told us of her stories from war- of how all that was left of her four-year old son- was a limb. The identifying and burial process that this mother, and many other mothers went through was traumatic, and the story left us all in tears. The mothers were never really apologized to, and were never given any justice. The war suddenly didn’t seem like a long time ago at all. During our return to Sarajevo, there was the longest silence on the bus. We were all left quite speechless, and found ourselves contemplating the way we think about our own lives. Visiting Srebrenica was possibly the most moving experience I have ever had. On our return, we ate dinner with “Humanity in Action” fellows from Bosnia- many of whom confessed to us that they had never visited Srebrenica, as they did not have the courage to confront one of the most horrifying spaces within their recent pasts. Many of these students had lost relatives, or known individuals to the genocide, and this, they claimed, was the most difficult aspect of the war to come to terms with.

Day 5

We began the day, splitting up into smaller groups- where each visited a different NGO. My group met with a representative from the ‘Youth in Human Rights’ organization- who

informed us of the various protests, and campaigns that they participate and organize to fight for less corruption, more equality and better opportunities for employment. The member informed us, that many people in the nation are unemployed, or underpaid unless they work for the government- but then they have to “become a part of the bureaucratic system.” The representative also took us on a walk to a market in Sarajevo- that was bombed during the siege. In the second half of the day, we took a bus, to a nearby hill, and went on a short hike. Despite the sad stories, the unfortunate present, and the chaotic governance- Bosnia is breathtakingly beautiful. In the midst of our hike, however, we noticed a certain was sectioned off- with a sign cautioning “land-mine area.” Once again- the war was very visible in sight. We returned to our hotel quite physically, but more so, mentally exhausted, and for the most of us, it was an early night.

Day 6

We went to lunch to a historic café- that was essentially converted from a home from Ottoman times. Following a delicious meal, we took a walk by the river, and then finally departed for the airport to return to Copenhagen.

In the short week that we spent in Sarajevo, we learnt a lot about the war, met with a range of locals, and were simultaneously awed by the beauty of the nation and saddened and shocked by the history and politics that surrounds it. The trip had a very profound impact on all of us, and we each hoped that we would some day return to Bosnia again.